

THE  
DUST  
OF THE  
ROAD

By

MARJORIE PATTERSON



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TONY

# THE DUST OF THE ROAD

By

MARJORIE PATTERSON

Author of "Fortunata"

With frontispiece in color by

E. M. WOOLFOLK



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This book is dedicated  
To my Mother and my Friend,  
MARGARET SHERWOOD PATTERSON



# THE DUST OF THE ROAD

## CHAPTER I

It is night and the great city is putting on its jewels. Along the buildings the electric lights uncoil like flaming serpents, blue, green, red, yellow. Advertisements of theaters, of cigarettes, of wines, burn ardently. Up and down Piccadilly goes the tide of tawdry women, and the motor busses growl by, spraying oil.

A young girl stood on the edge of the pavement, waiting to cross the street. The men turned to look at her as they passed. After a moment's hesitation, she slipped between the traffic and entered one of the cinematographs that line Piccadilly.

"I beg your pardon," she said to the man who stood up to let her take the chair next to his.

"Strange, attractive voice," thought he.

"Click, tick," went the cinematograph. Some one brutalized a piano in the darkness.

I wonder what she is, thought the man who sat next to the girl. It's the Quartier Latin type—the corduroy coat, cut like a boy's, the big linen collar, short hair . . . or is it only curled up under that *béret*? She's dark enough for an Italian; looks like a toy Nihilist. I like that mane of hers. Yes, she's a *grisette*, come to London for *La Rigolade* or more likely a Bohemian, an artist from Montmartre.

And he studied the face that gleamed with a golden pallor close to his in the darkness. It was as amusing a profile as you could hope to see. It radiated gaiety, courage. The forehead meant "to want is to have," the nose turned itself

up in triumph, the chin—such an impudent chin—mocked failure.

With one chord the pianist stunned his instrument into silence. The startled lights popped up. In the glare the man found himself still staring at the girl. She felt his attention, his interest. She turned, she met his gaze. His heart missed a beat; not that she was pretty, this pale young woman with irregular features and a tender, sensuous mouth, but her eyes stirred and troubled him.

There is in the eyes of some human beings a look which reproves the belief of the materialist, a look which assures us we have a soul; not the soul of the Christian, perhaps, whose inheritance is Heaven or Hell, but a spark mysterious and solitary that has nothing in common with our poor bodies, a spirit that thinks, suffers, aspires, and rises at moments to look out of the eyes.

Not a Frenchwoman, thought the man. Something more primitive—a Russian, possibly a Roumanian.

The lights went out, leaving her face a pale blotch close to his.

The pianist beat his instrument back to consciousness; the cinematograph whirled into action, and the girl looked away from the man.

The shadow play began. Vice was unmasked, virtue crowned, and the lovers reunited.

She can't be respectable; the time and this place alone prove. . . . And just then she laughed—the shadow people had pleased her—and her laugh, virginal, almost childish, told him he was wrong.

Let's hear if she has an accent, and bending forward, he spoke to her:

"How bad the air is."

"Yes, isn't it?" she assented, in her low, level voice. "And what makes it worse is that I washed my gloves this morning with benzine, and I can't smell anything else."



No accent, he thought. . . . She's English; and yet there was something. She's Australian. Let's try again.

"These moving pictures seem to fascinate you. You never take your eyes off them."

"I'm an actress, or rather I want to be one." Her profile was still turned to him. "And I find I learn a lot at these shows. Gestures, movements, what you call pantomime."

"You are American!"

"Yes, thank God."

"As an American, you won't find it easy to succeed over here."

"Why not?" She turned and looked at him directly, with her penetrating, hardy gaze. "Then it is true you're jealous of us because we are quicker than you." She flushed suddenly. "Please forgive me—I didn't mean to be rude."

"You are not rude, only patriotic."

"Well, it sometimes comes to the same thing."

"Tell me, why do you come to England to learn your profession? Why do you leave America, if you think so badly of us?"

"Oh, I didn't say that," she protested. And just as he thought he didn't like her, she smiled and took his heart,—took it as a robber takes a purse, suddenly, irrevocably. "If we are quick, you are thorough. If we know our business by instinct, you know yours by training." She paused, and then, with a sudden warmth of voice, she went on rapidly, almost in a whisper: "I've given a lot of thought to acting. My work is never from my mind. I am ambitious. It means suffering to be as ambitious as I am. I love my art so much it hurts me. I want to pick the brains of every country, and when I go home . . ."

Her voice softened on the word "home," and he felt that she must be very young, hardly more than a child.

"And when I go home" . . . she spoke as if to herself . . . "I must take with me the very best, the reserve

of England, the finish of France, the fire of Italy. I shall breathe them into me. I shall get them into my blood, and I shall bring them to America."

She had grown pale. Her expression was revolutionized. The boyish look in her eyes was gone, and talent, always tortured, always in travail, dilated her pupils.

Without impertinence, but with an unwinking scrutiny, the man still studied the girl. He was an Englishman, more than middle-aged, with a long, rather sad face, big features, and a gray beard. Something in his expression, a look of patience, of faithfulness, reminded one irresistibly of a Newfoundland dog. One had but to see this man to know he was fond of children and kind to beasts. Under his shaggy brows his eyes glowed and twinkled with a positive passion for humanity, a tender humor that transfigured the animal simplicity of his face.

"How long have you been from home?" he asked gently.

"Almost a year."

"What a wistful voice! You say 'almost a year' as though you meant 'Just think of it! I am still alive, nevertheless.' Where are you staying here?"

"Ah, that's just it!" She became practical, and pulling off her cap, she fanned herself with it. Her short hair blew across her forehead. "I'm in an awful mess. Some friends told me I should find rooms in Wigmore Street—theatrical name, isn't it? and so hairy—so I left my trunk in Charing Cross and went to the address, but the price was too high. I know no one in London, and I couldn't think, there was so much light and noise in the streets, so I bolted in here. Now what shall I do?" She turned to him with the disconcerting trust of the artist.

"I know a woman in Robert Street who has excellent lodgings and whose prices, I believe, are very reasonable."

"Would you give me the address?"

"What a piteous voice! You'll surely make an actress.

Not only will I give you the address, but I'll take you to the door."

"Oh, thank you. I hope this time it was a grateful voice."

They both laughed and he half rose. "Shall we go now?"

"Suppose we stay and see just this one last picture?" Her manner was that of an anxious but well-bred child.

And when, to her evident relief, he answered "By all means," and sat down, she turned her attention to the shadow play.

It depicted the sufferings of an elderly bachelor, who, having advertised for a wife, receives a simultaneous visit from every old maid in the town. Alarmed by the army of spinsters, he escapes through the window, only to be pursued uphill, down dale, through brake, over briar, by the inflammable virgins. The vestals swim the river, they wade the ford, they gallop across the plowed ground, their white pantalettes flap in the breeze; their lath-like legs outskim the wind; they vault the fences; they shin up the trees, and in a bog they catch him and come down on him like the locust.

As the chase ended, the man asked the girl "Shall we go?"

She nodded and followed him into the street in a pre-occupied fashion, as though absorbed in a mental problem.

Outside she spoke.

"Old maids are always held up to ridicule, aren't they? The word 'old maid' is a reproach."

"Well, it's hardly a compliment."

"It's the cause of many a loveless marriage," she answered gravely. "I believe half the women who marry take a husband through fear of that name. It's so silly. As if we weren't born with relatives enough. It's a form of vanity I can't understand. I wouldn't be married, no, not for a fortune."

"A fortune wouldn't mean much to a Bohemian savage such as you."

She hesitated a moment. "Well, I wouldn't be married—no, not for the talent of Bernhardt and Duse and Rachel boiled into one." She laughed, but a change had come over her face, an indefinable shade of sadness, almost of suffering. He thought she was tired and signaled to a taxi.

"No, no; let's walk, unless you'd rather ride."

"Very well, we'll walk. This is the way, towards the Strand."

"Gracious!" she stopped abruptly. "I've forgotten to put on my hat!" and she pulled her cap down over her ears.

She hadn't gone a yard when she came again to a standstill. "Gracious! I've forgotten to get my trunk at Charing Cross, and Samuel Pickwick!"

"Who is Samuel Pickwick?"

"He's my dog."

"Charing Cross is this way."

She swung along at his side, her hands in her pockets, her funny little face turned to the stars.

"You walk as fast as a boy," he exclaimed.

She nodded. Her mouth was pursed up as though she were inwardly whistling; and as she had nothing to say, she said nothing, which is unlike a woman.

When her companion asked her whether she preferred New York to London, again she nodded. "Yep." When he suggested that possibly at times she felt homesick, she shrugged as she marched along. When he ventured to hope she didn't overwork, she grunted; after which, she yawned once or twice and proceeded to whistle *sotto voce*.

"She's certainly very unconventional," thought he, "not to say rude." And just then she turned, she looked straight into his eyes. "I shall never forget how kind you've been to me," said she, and her brusque charm won him again.



"Since four o'clock," she confided, "I've walked the streets. What must Samuel Pickwick think?"

"Samuel Pickwick is a pompous name."

"Samuel Pickwick is a pompous dog. Poor Samuel," she mused, her head tilted back, as though she were flaring the night air. "We came from Paris, he and I, two months ago. I've been studying there at the Conservatoire, you see. When we got here, I went to stay with a girl at Clapham Junction, and he went into quarantine. He just came out to-day. He was rather huffy when we met this morning, but I explained to him he hadn't been in jail, only taking a rest cure at a sanatorium."

"Don't you find it very troublesome to travel with a dog?"

"I shouldn't mind it if Samuel didn't object to the irregular life. He's very conservative. He doesn't approve of my studying for the stage. Why do you laugh? I'm in earnest. It's not pleasant for a dog Pickwick's age, who is in no way an artist, to give up all his habits and go trapezing round the country. The hours are very irregular and trying."

"What breed of dog is he?"

"Well, I call him a bull," she confided. "His mother was a French bull . . . and very French she was in her behavior. But we never did know who his father was, though I always had my suspicions. His mother was our dog 'Drab.' I named her Drab because her morals were so bad, but people who didn't know used to think it was her color. Samuel is a snob. It's the way so often, isn't it, with people whose ancestry isn't quite . . . well, you know what I mean. His deportment is very fine, though his legs do give him away, and there's something wrong with his tail. But I love him," she added, almost shyly, as though admitting a weakness. "You see I first saw him when he was so little and helpless. Father wanted

to drown the whole litter, but I begged Samuel off. He has been my dog ever since, and I do love him because he's so trusting and so ugly—just like a little gargoyle, smiling and panting, and turning out his toes like a frog."

The shriek of engines, the thunder of trains, broke in on her voice. Charing Cross gaped, black as the opening to hell, stinking with smoke and sweating cinders.

As the two friends—for they were friends now—passed into the station where the panicky trains were sobbing and the soot and coal dust flew, she looked up at him.

"What is your name?"

Something in her voice made him think of his childhood. He remembered a boy with whom he had played for a day, and who, when leaving him, had asked him the same question in the same manner.

"My name is Robert Felton. And yours?"

"Mine is Tony, short for Antoinette. I'm never called Antoinette. It's too ladylike for me. My last name, my stage name I mean, is Ethgrete, spelt E-t-h-g-r-e-t-e. How do you think it sounds—successful, I mean?"

To please her, he answered "Eminently successful," with rather more enthusiasm than he felt.

"I made it up myself," she proudly assured him. "It is 'Get there,' with the letters changed about."

She looked up at him for appreciation, for sympathy. "Oh, I did have a time deciding. I tried Success, and Glory, and Fame, but Get There is the best. Fame is very bad, 'Amef,' 'Afme.' Sounds like the name of a genii, doesn't it? Later on," the thought of the future darkened her eyes—"when I'm scolded, for scolded I shall be"—she was waxing enthusiastic—"when a stage manager says to me, 'Miss Ethgrete, you're wrong,' or something worse, I'll remember my name means 'Get there.' It will brace me up; it sounds lucky to me."

He smiled at her. "I can quite imagine its becoming famous."

She set her chin and squared her shoulders. "That depends on me. I believe one can get anything in this world if one will only work for it and want it hard enough. Isn't that true?"

"Work always helps," he answered gently, "but art isn't learnt just through young, healthy spirits and reaching out your hands. It's a life of suffering that goes to the making of an artist."

"Then I've got to suffer," she answered cheerfully.

And his heart contracted as at the sight of something very young, new to the world and ignorant.

## CHAPTER II

"LOOK at that dog," said Tony. "I ask you to look at that dog." And dramatically, with a sweeping gesture, she pointed to where a little brindled bull was tied to a box. He had fastened his teeth in the rope and was chewing it to his heart's content, while he bounded about in a light-hearted, not to say jocund, fashion.

"The moment that dog sees me," continued Tony impressively, "he'll sit down as though he were crushed with the fatigue and anxiety of watching over my trunk. Samuel," she called.

Instantly Pickwick disgorged the rope and struck a rigid attitude that combined the heroism of the soldier with the resignation of the martyr.

"Porter, help me untie my dog's cord, will you?"

"'E's a sentinel, that's wat 'e is," said the porter, impressed.

"He's a fraud," said Tony.

And very stiffly Samuel Pickwick advanced towards his mistress, with the paddling gait peculiar to elderly gentlemen in carpet slippers.

"'Ere's your box, loidy." The porter shouldered Tony's shabby trunk.

"Put it on a taxi," Felton said. He then gave an address to the chauffeur, assisted the dignified Pickwick to a back seat, and followed Tony into the auto.

"There's the Haymarket Theater." Tony's head was out of the window. "I wonder who manages the Haymarket. It's sympathetic; any one could act there. There's St. Mar-



tin's in the Fields; and there's a drunken woman. No, Samuel, you must ride backwards. That's Hyde Park. Father used to call these country bits the lungs of a city."

Suddenly she drew in her head and, clasping her hands, exclaimed "Gracious!"

"You've forgotten something?"

She smiled reassuringly. "No, it's all right. I remember where I put it. It's a letter to Gregers Webster, the touring manager. I want to join his school. The girl I was staying with at Clapham Junction—her name is Potts, but she calls herself Mondragonie—is in his company. She gave me a letter to him."

"You couldn't have better experience. Most of our leading actors come from Webster's company. Begin with supering and work up; it's the only way to learn stagecraft."

"You seem to know the profession. Are you in it?"

"I'm a dramatic critic."

"Mercy, let me look at you. Oh, no, it can't be. You don't mind my studying you so attentively, do you?"

He laughed, half amused, half embarrassed.

"Just to think; they've only to know you're in the theater for the heart of every member in a company to start thumping; you—such a pleasant, human-looking man."

"I could give you a letter to Webster."

"Oh, yes, and say I'm very clever."

"My dear young lady." He spoke with the old-fashioned precision peculiar to him at times. "I can hardly say that—I've never seen you act. But I'll tell you, though, what I will say—that you seem a very ardent student of the drama."

"Oh, that's very nice," said Tony politely. "Thank you so much." But her spirits ran rapidly downhill and she didn't speak again until the taxi stopped before the lodging-house in Robert Street.

Then she said, "I should like to ask you to supper. I know it's not considered correct for a girl to have supper with a man, but that's when he gives the party. Now if I give the party, it will make a difference, won't it?"

She smiled at him. It was a conventional little smile, quite unlike her usual contagious grin, and for the first time he realized that this young nomad must be a girl of the world, broken loose from traditions and home.

"I don't know about supper, but I'll wait to see if your room satisfies you."

The door of No. 26 swung open, and under the hall light was silhouetted the form of the landlady, Mrs. Bulsome Potter. Very large was Mrs. Bulsome Potter, very gloomy, and preposterously fat. Her wedding ring was imbedded in her finger. A brooch was sunk in her billowy breast. It seemed set in her very flesh. Her neck descended in layers, in folds upon folds, to repose on her Peter Pan collar; and her face, disconcertingly large, wore the expression of primitive melancholy peculiar to semi-aquatic beasts.

Every lodging-house keeper has, of course, her method of attracting clients, but startling in the extreme was the system of Mrs. Bulsome Potter. It consisted in disparaging all her belongings and deploring her inability to make a guest comfortable.

When the travel-stained lodger in embryo inquired into the possibility of having a bath, Mrs. Bulsome Potter was wont to imply that in No. 26 water was as rare as in the Sahara; when again the lodger in embryo declared a taste for fresh eggs, Mrs. Bulsome Potter would announce, with the grandeur of misfortune, that for the last few months hardly a good egg had passed her door.

It must be confessed that the landlady was a pessimist. In reality, No. 26 was as comfortable, clean, well-organized a lodging-house as you could find, and, astonishing as it

may seem, always full to overflowing with guests who had been enticed by Mrs. Bulsome Potter's candid, disinterested manner. Her lodgers no doubt felt that a woman so nobly truthful could not possibly overcharge.

When, then, Tony asked if a small bedroom was to be had, Mrs. Bulsome Potter admitted to a very small bedroom, which was also a very cold one, and with Tony in her wake she mounted the stairs, her corset creaking in an ominous fashion.

"My bed runs the way of the boards, which means luck and good dreams." Tony had joined Felton in the dining-room. "Now for supper. You must stay. Mrs. Potter, what can you give us? Some cold meat and some salad, yes; and some beer. Anything, so long as it isn't vegetable marrow. I can't get used to vegetable marrow."

Mrs. Bulsome Potter sighed, as though regretting the poisonous meal she felt forced to serve, and left the room.

Tony offered Felton a chair, chose the arm of one for herself, perched on it like a gnome, pulled off her hat, threw it on the sofa, and out of her pocket she took a cigarette case.

"Will you smoke, Mr. Felton?"

"Thank you, no—after supper. Let me light yours for you."

"My only vice," she amiably informed him; and smiled in a friendly way at him through the smoke.

Just then Pickwick toddled in, panting, and climbing into a chair, sat staring reproachfully at his mistress.

"He wants us to notice that the stairs have put him out of breath. But don't pay any attention to him, Mr. Felton."

After Mrs. Bulsome Potter had placed the walnuts on the table, with the lugubrious remark, "'Ere's some 'usks for you," and departed, Felton, in the intimacy born of a good supper, said:

"Once you spoke of the Conservatoire. For a long time I've wanted to write an article on it. Tell me about it."

"Well, it's an institution for the training of actors."

"Yes, yes, of course; of many hundred years' standing, run at the expense of France. But your personal experiences there? That's what I want to hear."

"Where shall I begin?"

"At the beginning."

Tony lighted a cigarette and handed her case to Felton. "Julia Marlowe, in answer to a letter of mine, advised me to make a fight to get in."

"The examination is competitive, isn't it?"

"Yes, any one from any country, so long as they are under twenty-one, can have a try."

"It must be a nerve-racking ordeal."

"Oh, when I first came into the great, bare room and saw the raised platform and the old gentlemen and Sarah Bernhardt judging in a row of armchairs, and most of the girl students with short hair, and all the men with long, I felt as brave as a lion. I thought how Rachel, Got, Coquelin, Mounet-Sully, had all been through it before in this very place, and I recollect wondering whether, when I had done with the Conservatoire, I should take a first prize and go into the Comédie Française, or a second and act at the Odéon."

He laughed. "You weren't diffident, were you?"

"Oh, it didn't last. As I watched the others fighting for the future, showing off their little tricks and mostly being turned down, a creeping anxiety came over me."

"I know the sensation—a tightening of the throat, a pounding of the heart."

"I remember one poor little girl in particular. Some one at home loved her evidently, and had dressed her up in furbelows and bows. When she was still piping at her recitation, Sarah Bernhardt and the old gentlemen, in an

irritated chorus, called: 'Enough, enough. The next, No. 36.' And 36 mounted the platform, as though it were the guillotine."

"You saw some singular types, I suppose?"

"The girl next me kept telling me she never went anywhere without her mother. The girl had a peroxidized head and a black mustache. I wondered why she didn't peroxidize the mustache as well. By this time my heart was beating the devil's tattoo, and I said to myself, 'Oh, to suffer this way, when I don't have to; to break from home and then perhaps not to make good.'"

"My poor child, what a responsibility."

"The man who spoke before me looked like Byron without cuffs. He told how he was a young mother, rocking the cradle. When he got half through, a look came over his face I shall never forget. He stopped. He couldn't go on. He had forgotten. Sarah Bernhardt and the old gentlemen motioned him down. He begged to start again—to begin just once more—to be given one more chance. They hurried him away. He was as white as chalk. His mouth was quivering like an old woman's. I never saw a man look like that before. I can't tell you what it did to me."

"Then it was your turn."

"'Allons, No. 59.' That was me. I got up and went to the platform, feeling oh, so queer about the legs, and I remember praying 'Dear Lord, give me courage, or let me have a fit, so I won't have to do it.' I reckon I stood for a time, swallowing and gasping, for Sarah Bernhardt and the old gentlemen began 'Allons! Allons! Perhaps it's for next week, No. 59.' Then I up and put my hands together. They were like two fish. I held back my head, I was off. The recitation—I had learnt it to please them—was all about France; how fertile it was and how I wanted to die for it. My voice was like a gramophone before it

gets started. The old gentlemen and Sarah Bernhardt made faces at each other. I said to myself 'I'm dished.' And then—I can't explain it—a sudden peace came over me—a sort of painful regret. I forgot I was on trial; I forgot it was France I was praising, and it seemed to me I was telling these French people of my own country, of my own home; how it was lost to me for a time, how I loved it, how dearly; and I suppose, without knowing it, I must have been homesick, for when I got through, I found I was crying. One of the old gentlemen said: 'The little girl has some qualities.' I could have hugged him for it."

"Bravo! And so you got in?"

"Yes; it was a squeak, though."

"And then what happened?"

"Well, then, I went to live in the Rue Ambroise Thomas, close to the Conservatoire, with one of the pupils. She was called Miquette. I never knew her other name. She had been a workgirl in the Rue de la Paix. She had loved a man very much—a gentleman. She had run away with him and he had deserted her. She had come back to Paris sad and poor. She said her sorrow had taught her she could act. She was very happy in her art—or so she said. But I don't think she forgot the man, because sometimes at night I used to hear her crying."

"She was hardly a fit companion."

"Honestly, she was a good girl when I knew her—such a hard worker. Oh, I forgot, she once stole an umbrella."

"Stole an umbrella?"

"Not exactly stole it—appropriated it wrongfully." Tony lit another cigarette. "You see it was this way. One afternoon Pickwick and Miquette and myself were in our room, when in came one of the other pupils. I forget her name, but she played the NOBLE MOTHERS. 'How it's raining,' she cried, taking her hat out from under her skirt. So it was, pouring. The French women were jump-



ing over the puddles, showing their stockings and crying 'Ouf!' They are so afraid of water. 'Jeunesse and I have no umbrella,' Miquette said. Jeunesse—that was her name for me, because I was always in good spirits and didn't seem to know much. 'On se fiche de si peu que diable,' the Noble Mother told us. 'I was at the Madeleine yesterday, asking for a crook-handled umbrella—this one, by the way. Not that I'd lost it, but this sort is always left about, and when out of the collection I had chosen this one and pretended to recognize it, I saw a charming umbrella with a cherry in the handle, entirely your affair.' 'I'll go claim it to-morrow,' said Miquette. And sure enough she did, and came home with such a pretty little umbrella, just as the Noble Mother had described it, with a cherry in the handle."

"And your studies, your work—what did you learn?"

"Well, the days we had classes we got up early."

"What a charm Paris has at the crack of the morning."

"Yes, when the market wagons come thundering in, and the street calls go up in a cry, and the little shop-girls are running on their way like mice."

"Yes, yes. The Conservatoire is where?"

"It's in the Rue du Conservatoire, off the Faubourg Poissonnière."

"Oh, yes, I remember; an old-fashioned, provincial-looking street."

"Of course, you've passed the Conservatoire, a big, shabby building with something homelike about it, and high walls all around. A humming goes on in it the day long, just like the buzzing of a hive, and the pupils for the grand opera drone do, ré, mi, fa, sol, sol, fa, mi, ré, do, till it soothes one like a charm."

"Yes, yes; it comes back to me. I've seen the students rushing out at midday, esthetic Apaches let loose. But go on."

"I belonged to Mr. Leitner's class, an actor of the Comédie Française. He taught us elocution, stage moves and falls, how to read letters from uncles leaving us lots of money, and how to meet lovers and see corpses on the floor—all the useful things."

"I thought after the teaching of the Conservatoire two years' acting on the French stage was obligatory."

"It is; but I got out of it. You see an actress on the French system is trained to play one sort of part. She is perfected in one rôle—either *chatelaine*, *aventurière*, *jeune première*, *héroïne*,"—Tony counted the names on her straight, white fingers—"grande coquette, demi-vierge, ingénue, amoureuse, amoureuse dramatique, tragédienne, femme du monde, femme galante—oh, I forget, there are at least a dozen more. Now, as you are judged on one recitation only, you are often given the wrong work. They cast me for the *enfant terrible* because I've got a funny face. I came through all right, but I didn't like always being comic and saying improper things by mistake. Then the French have so many gestures—so many intonations that aren't natural to us. I wondered how much of their training was good for our theater, and—well, of course the French stage is no Sunday school, and no mistake. So I went to the old gentleman, the one who said I had qualities, and told him all about it. He understood. 'We must see what we can do, Jeunesse.' He had influence, he managed it somehow, and I came away with *Pickwick*."

A sudden glow passed through her eyes, a smile reminiscent and tender. "We cried, Miquette and I, when we said good-by. She wanted me to take the umbrella."

A silence came between them. Perhaps the allegorical angel had passed. The young girl was looking down. Her strong, black lashes swept her cheeks. Felton was astonished at the beauty that had flashed over her face. Habitually, Tony was not pretty; only in moments of remembrance,

when she spoke of her home, or, as now, when she thought of her friend, her expression seemed to melt, to soften to an exquisite tenderness. Felton, who was something of a poet, could not help feeling that when the hour of love came to her this woman would be transfigured, glow and pale with a disturbing loveliness. After a pause, he asked:

"And you're happy in your work?"

"It's the blood of my life. It keeps my heart beating."

"The stage may lose its charm. Suppose when you marry your husband disapproves. There will be a complication when love comes into your life."

"That can never happen."

"Ah, Jeunesse, how well your friend named you!"

"When I feel love coming to me, I shall combat it as a man might a craving for alcohol."

"Why?"

"Because I believe it's the greatest misfortune that can happen to a woman."

"How seriously you said that. You've grown quite pale."

"When I was a child I lived in the shadow of love, as it were." She hesitated. "Through some one dear to me I learnt one of the saddest love stories that ever was."

"It made you morbid."

"It taught me that love is—well, not happiness, that's certain."

"Real love?"

"It's real love I mean. The only kind to be afraid of is real love."

"But you, an actress, who must depict the passions and torture of humanity, cannot do so without having lived."

"You mean that an old maid does not make an emotional actress."

"Frankly, I do."

"You're wrong. I feel you're wrong. I cannot think the power of acting, the power to bring tears to people's

eyes, is learnt in one existence. No, not even through love. To be an actress—I do believe it—a woman must have endured a cycle of lives, each life—how shall I say—torn with emotions—yes, vibrating with suffering—the passion of one existence, more or less, hardly counts.”

“Yours is the theory of the transmigration of souls.”

“I don’t know what that is. I only know I’ve lived before. There are to be no sentimental complications this time. This is to be my happy life. I’ll be free as a bird on the bough. . . .”

“The bird on the bough has a nest. . . .”

“Then I’ll have an advantage over the bird. I’ll have no nest. A nice old maid, that’s what I’ll be. I glory in the thought.”

“Do you know the proverb, “Nessima creature ha visuto senza amore’?”

“Fudge, there’s many a person would never have felt love if they had never heard of it first.”

“I believe it to be as inevitable as death. You cannot avoid it.”

“I bet I can.”

“How would you set to work?”

“As I should set to work to avoid a germ if there was an epidemic about, by taking precautions. What’s more tenacious than a cold? Yet, if you tackle it in time, you can get rid of it.”

“You’ll marry—I predict it.”

“Never. Marriage is the destruction of an actress’s career.”

“Love will be too strong for you.”

“You don’t know what a will I have!”

“In three years from now—how old are you?”

“Nineteen and a half.”

“We’ll make it five years from now.”

“What will happen?”

"When you recall this conversation, you'll laugh, Jeunesse."

She shook her head. "Never, never." Her hair, fine as a child's, swung from side to side. Just then, out of the dining-room clock, sprang an impudent cuckoo and called twelve times.

"I had no idea it was so late," Felton exclaimed, starting to his feet. "See! Pickwick is already asleep. Before I go, I must just scribble a line to Webster for you." And he crossed the room to where a desk stood between the two windows.

"Samuel has a beautiful face when in repose," declared Tony in contemplation before the little mongrel. "That ridged forehead, those prominent eyes—in fact, his every feature does remind me so of Beethoven."

Unconscious of the comparison, the majestic Pickwick slept on. To judge from the recurrent quivering of his whiskers, his sleep was visited by whimsical and canine dreams.

"Here's your letter to Webster." Felton had risen from the desk. "And here, on this bit of paper, is my address. I'm most earnest when I ask you to let me hear from you. Do you leave London to-morrow?"

"If Webster let's me join his school, day after to-morrow."

"And now, tell me one more thing. Where do you come from in America?"

"From Virginia—from the South."

"It's a beautiful country, is it not?"

"It is, to me." As though by magic, two big tears had sprung into her eyes.

"If life ever turns on you, takes one of its ugly twists, write me. Don't think of me as an unfamiliar elderly gentleman, but remember I'm your friend. Will you promise?"

"I will." She gave him her hand on it, like a boy.

"Good-by, then, and good luck."

"Good-by, Mr. Felton. And may you, too, be very lucky."

"Good-by, my friend Pickwick. God bless you, Jeunesse."



### CHAPTER III

BETWEEN Williamsburg and Richmond, the road runs by a wall that incloses one of the loveliest gardens in Virginia. Though the summer be at her fiercest, here there is always a breath of wind, a sigh from the bosom of nature, redolent with perfumes, poignant with the humid fragrance of the earth. The wall is splashed with color, voluptuous roses, magnolias swooning in their scent, furious, variegated fungi. It is as though a sylvan god had, in a bacchanalian frenzy, thrown some of the secret riches of the garden out over the wall for the whole country to see. The trees of this retreat, fit for a hermitage of love, overshadow the road. The foliage quivers expectantly, as though it has root in a soil that knows a mysterious romance.

Here in the heart of this garden, in a rambling, colonial house, Tony was born. Her father, Oscar Meredith, of the old Southern family of Meredith, was a man of breeding, of culture, and profoundly, religiously snobbish. The American snob, by the way, is somewhat of a phenomenon, but we are a thorough nation,—our heroes are the best of their kind, and when we choose to be snobs, oh what snobs we are! Mr. Meredith was inordinately proud of having shown the discretion to be born a Meredith rather than a Smith or a Brown; that he had inherited a fortune sufficient to support him without an effort on his part, either physical or mental, he accepted as a compliment by providence to his delicate and aristocratic nature. The acutest pleasure he had ever known was to recount his genealogy, not boastfully mind you, not vulgarly, but rather as one reads a succulent menu when one has lost one's appetite. He was

wont to intersperse the family annals with remarks such as "The hands of Vandyke's portraits do indeed show race," at the same moment allowing his own long taper fingers to flit across your view; or, "The blue blood of our country is dying out." A parvenu would have given his immortal soul to say those two words, "Blue blood," as Oscar did. Meredith's own veins, his listeners felt perforce, must flow with a liquid dark as indigo.

At the start of life, Tony's father had been endowed with a very fair brain. He had employed it in reading etiquette books, in learning de Brett by heart, Burke's Peerage, and the Blue Books, in gleaning information from foreign courts, in studying the correct cut of clothes, and in perfecting himself in the mysteries of the cotillon. Gifted for gossip, he rarely failed to remember who was dead, who jilted, who divorced—in short, Oscar was a bubbling fountain of glad nothings.

Oscar was cursed with a social conscience. When one of those conversational misfortunes befell him—they befall us all—such as addressing a divorcée by her former name, or asking a newly made widow the whereabouts of her husband, the sense of guilt he suffered would have driven a good Catholic to the confessional. No social butterfly was Oscar Meredith, no frivolous devotee of fashion. He was a missionary of good manners, an apostle to the conventions, a man crucifying himself for society, and while he bled on her altars, society referred to him familiarly as "Old Etiquette" or "Old Pomp."

Meredith had just the right face to dedicate his life to paying calls and leaving p. p. c. cards. It was as regular as though machine made. His eyes looked out on life, cold and empty, recalling the glass optics displayed pair by pair in the optician's window. His whole expression, or rather lack of expression, breathed the hollow nobility peculiar to certain Greek statues whose features are never

ravaged by emotions or thought. What personality Oscar possessed was bestowed on him, strangely enough, by an infirmity. Through laryngitis he had lost his voice. He never spoke above a whisper—but what a whisper—so whistling, so penetrating, that it cut its way through a conversation. Tea parties quivered when Oscar Meredith hissed for the muffins. Strangers concluded he suffered from mania and imagined himself a viper in a bush.

Early one morning, as long ago as twenty years, when all the birds of his garden were trying their voices, Oscar Meredith stood at his window, in his right hand a pink tie, in his left a gray. To himself he said, "Which shall I wear?" and all the while he frowned like a prime minister. It was a day of some importance. He was about to propose marriage to a Miss Eva Bouchier, a young girl of the neighborhood, whose blood Oscar felt confident was as blue as the Mediterranean. It was for the gray necktie he decided, and with it bound about his throat, off he went to offer his heart. He was accepted. Because Eva Bouchier was in love with him? No; she hadn't a twinge of sympathy for him, but in her case one hundred and one trivialities combined in their entirety to make a sufficient reason for a woman to become a man's wife.

No sooner was Eva bound to Oscar by the marriage tie than he preached to her of the Beauty of Prestige. His dream, he told her, was to make of his wife the ideal hostess. Poor little Eva! As in hotel bedrooms a placard is pasted advising the guests to ring three times for the boots, etc., Oscar, figuratively speaking, hung above the nuptial couch a list of hints for the perfect guidance of a high-bred woman. Heavens! but the routine of life was complicated when Oscar had the running of it. Eva pined on the social treadmill. Under the tutelage of "Old Etiquette" her gaiety evaporated, as the perfume of wild flowers is sometimes lost through pruning.

Two years later a daughter was born to Oscar. He named her Antoinette after his wife's grandmother, a famous beauty whose husband, Colonel Bouchier, had been the friend of Washington and of Lord Fairfax.

Antoinette was a big name for a little girl who chirped all day like a tree toad, and so dearly did every one love her that even in this house of pomp Antoinette became "Tony."

Little by little Eva Bouchier concluded that her marriage had not been for her happiness. She was one of those women to whom love—reciprocated and passionate love—is as essential as oxygen. When she married, she had not known this. There is much one does not know about oneself at nineteen, and the years brought her romance,—the inevitable romance of every woman who marries for other reasons than love and later meets the man who might have made her happiness. Only in their end do love stories vary. Eva's idyll flamed into melodrama crude and horrible enough to devastate a life. It came about like this.

Oscar gave a ball. At the third waltz he brought his wife a partner. She fixed her gaze on her guest's pearl studs and began the pretty talk her husband had taught her. The young man asked her to dance. Something in the way he took her in his arms made her look into his face. All the blood of her body seemed to flow to her heart. He turned as pale as she, and they stood like two ghosts who remember, who regret. He lived not far away, he told her. He had bought a house two miles from the turnpike road—from the railway crossing—and through their ballroom talk throbbed the surge, the rush, the oncome of love.

All this was in April—none of your hardy northern Aprils, the hollows filled with violets in the night and the brazen spring there by the morning—but a shy season, who gave herself to the possession of the sun little by little, allowing

imagination to run faster than fulfilment, as a beloved mistress lets her robes sink to the ground very gently.

Eva saw the young man—not many times—he never told her that he loved her. Yet she knew what was consuming her was burning him away. One morning she went to her husband. She told him all her story.

“Take me away, Oscar,” she pleaded, “I want to be cured.”

Oscar looked at his wife through a piece of window-pane that he wore as an eyeglass. “The best cure would be to see the young man every day.”

“You don’t understand,” and tears trembled in her eyes.

“A Meredith can never bear to see a woman cry. We will leave to-night, Eva.”

That same afternoon Tony, a brigand of six, very brown and determined, was clinging half-way up a bank near the railway crossing. An adventurous spirit and a taste for honeysuckle had led her there.

“Mother,” she called to Eva, who stood beneath her on the track, “here’s the man that likes you,” and Eva, turning, came face to face with the young man.

“I’m going away,” she told him. “I shall never see you again.”

He did not speak.

“By the nine-thirty train I’m going away—the train that passes here.”

Still he did not speak.

The young woman put her arm round her little daughter and turned away.

“Won’t you say good-by, Eva?”

She looked back at him and answered. “Good-by.”

“Won’t you shake hands, Eva.”

Her child had her right hand, but her soul seemed to pass through her eyes and come to him bruised, aching with love.

Eva went home through the hush of the evening, and Tony, trying to keep step with her mother, said to herself, "I don't like to see a grown-up cry!"

That night the nine-thirty express rushed through the dark, shaking in every fiber, its inflamed eye riding on before. At the turnpike crossing it struck some substance and crushed over it. Tony, sleeping resolutely, slipped against her mother's shoulder.

"A dog on the track, I suppose?" said Oscar.

The brakes grated, the express backed, halted shuddering in the dark country, while whispers went round—"No cow-catcher, disgraceful!"—"You couldn't recognize *that*, could you?" and away the train ran, hurrying like a guilty thing.

The color left Eva's face, never to return. All night she listened wide-eyed, while the engine screeched "I am no murderer," and the homicidal wheels ground round.

The young man had thrown himself across the track and from that moment Eva started in obstinately to die.

For two years Oscar forced his wife to sample the waters of Aix, Carlsbad, Vichy, and at Nice she took to her bed. One afternoon when the band was playing, while the scent of flowers hung heavy as a drug, the trained nurse saw Eva slip into a deep sleep. Such a look of youth, of beauty, reappeared on the poor wasted face, that the nurse said "It's possible she may get well," but on touching one of the hands that lay on the sheet, the woman spoke in her surprise: "She's dead." . . .

"Are you sure, Doctor?" whispered Oscar.

"Look," the physician answered, and with a clever movement of his fingers, he drew up the eyelids. Tony, standing at the foot of the bed, her little hands clasped, met the gaze of those dear eyes. They looked much as they had in life, and the mother seemed to see her child for one long moment.



Oscar, ever attentive to the voice of ceremony, stalked about in mourning as black as a crow. He had a coffin made—in itself a work of art, really a possession—and he took his poor wife home to America. His daughter he left in Paris at a school he had heard highly praised, the Convent of the Servants of God. Oscar was a Catholic.

At first Tony was very sad, as sad as a little girl of eight can possibly be. But when in one afternoon you meet fifty other little girls, and feel you are going to detest some and love others—well, it's distracting; and although Tony knew that never, never could she find another mother, here were twenty kind nuns to take good care of Tony.

She was very happy now. Matins woke her, the Angelus sent her off to sleep, the chapel, veiled in incense, starred with palpitating flames, vibrated to the organ's voice, and Tony's heart, oppressed with music, seemed to go out of her breast to the blessed Mother who held the little Christ so safely. To Tony the Saviour had never grown up, suffered, and died on the cross. He was always a child, hardly big enough to be out of His Mother's arms, but so wise that if ever Tony were unhappy, He understood, although the sorrow might be much beyond His years. Tony loved Him with an anxious tenderness. She longed to wait upon Him, just as the little St. John the Baptist keeps watch over Him in the pictures.

After three years, Oscar decided to bring his daughter home. As a society man, he of course had been busy; nevertheless, he had written to her regularly, supplied her amply with money, arranged for her holidays to be spent at the seaside with a companion, and shown in every way that he had not forgotten her.

One afternoon in October, when the leaves of the cloister garden were skipping before the breeze and the chestnut venders were calling in the street, Oscar stood on the steps of the Convent of the Servants of God, while Sister Mary

Magdalene had a good look at him through a barred aperture.

Oscar, in his pedantic French, explained for what he had come, and the nun cried out, all of a twitter, "Entrez, Monsieur, entrez."

Sister Mary Magdalene in no way resembled her voluptuous namesake. She was a squat little woman whose face was as brown and wrinkled as a winter apple, and she served God very humbly, washing the floor of His church.

"Come to the parloir, Monsieur," and Oscar, ultra-refined, under his arm a top hat that shone like a cylinder, followed the dumpy nun into the visitors' room. "See, Monsieur," said the good sister, leading Meredith to the window—and she pointed into the convent garden where a group of little girls, in black aprons, played obstreperously with a gorgeously striped ball—"has not 'Toinette grown, Monsieur?"

"Marvelous, marvelous," murmured Oscar, though he hadn't a ghost of an idea which of the little black imps was his—a child changes so from eight to eleven.

"What a dear little one—you shall see." And Sister Mary Magdalene trotted off as mysterious as a mother on Christmas Eve.

Oscar was left with the Pope, who blessed him from over the fireplace, while on the opposite side smiled a St. Sebastian, as unemotional as a pin cushion.

"Voilà, Monsieur." It was Sister Mary Magdalene back again; and turning, Oscar saw a child in a black apron, whose large, gray eyes shone from under her shock of dark hair with a hardy innocence. Tony it was who stood in the doorway. "A father," she thought, while the beating of her heart made her body tremble and her pinafore shake. "A father," she said to herself, "must have something quite special about him to make a daughter go straight into his arms."

"How she reminds me of her mother," whispered Oscar.

Not that Tony did resemble Eva, but Meredith felt the awkward pause needed filling in.

"Eh, bien," murmured Sister Mary Magdalene, "doesn't one kiss one's papa?"

Oscar smiled winningly, and the child gave him both her little hands. They fluttered like two birds and were very cold.

"Her circulation is bad," said Oscar to Sister Mary Magdalene; but the good soul had already tiptoed away, feeling that daughter and father must meet alone.

There stood Meredith, gripping the little girl by the wrists, while the voices of the children in the yard thrilled out in shrill and bird-like cadences. Oscar didn't know whether to keep the chilly little hands in his or not. He decided to drop them, and bending, he kissed Tony on the brow, on a strand of hair that swept across her forehead like a plume.

"Ahem! Well, here we are, Antoinette. You are glad to see me, I hope." Oscar's manner was cordial in the extreme.

Tony looked at her father, and after a pause she answered:

"I'm not so glad as I thought I should be."

Mr. Meredith, habituated to the graces of society, was momentarily disconcerted.

"Ah—well, I suppose we might as well sit down." And politely he placed a chair for Tony, who sat gravely on the edge of it, so that her feet might reach the ground.

"I cannot say, Antoinette, that this . . . convent garb is particularly becoming to you."

Tony smoothed the folds of her black pinafore affectionately. "This is my best dress," she told him. "I put it on for you."

"Ah, well; when I choose your clothes, I hope to make you look prettier."

Tony's little hands went up to her throat and closed over a medallion. "I shall always wear my medal, though," she said. "It's the Blessed Virgin and her Child. Sister Mary Magdalene gave it to me."

"You shall have prettier medals than that," her father assured her pleasantly. "You've been happy, I hope."

Her eyes darkened. "I'm not so happy as I used to be."

"Ah, and why not?" queried Oscar, with the polite interest of a visitor.

"I'm not so religious, that's why."

"Ah?" Oscar smoothed his top hat.

"When I was little, I used to think that God took care of every animal, but this summer Sister Mary Magdalene and me, we saw a fiacre driver beat his horse till it fell down. He beat it more, but it couldn't get up, because it was so old it had died; and that made me notice things . . . many other things . . . but Sister Mary Magdalene says when I grow up I shall understand and be religious again."

"A little religion is exquisite in a woman," Oscar assured, slipping from habit into his social sparkle. "It doesn't assist her materially, of course, but it gives a charm, a glamor"—he broke off confused by the soul-searching scrutiny, the steady radiance of the child's eyes. A silence ensued, and Oscar was more ill at ease than if he were striving to entertain the Infanta.

"Some currant syrup for Monsieur." Sister Mary Magdalene had trotted in, her hobnailed boots resounding on the tiled floor like the hoofs of a pony. Beaming, she placed the carafe on the center table, while Tony gazed rapturously on the red liquid.

"Thank you," said Oscar, "but I never touch sugar in any form. In our family we combat a tendency to *avoirdupois*. Antoinette"—he bent toward the child his noble head, silvered at the temples by the pursuit of social

lore—"I shall call for you to-morrow at ten. We sail for America on the eighth."

Tony swallowed hard, and Sister Mary Magdalene said rather shakily, "You see, my 'Toinette, you are now a big girl. You will soon be a young lady."

Oscar put on his gloves. "I hope," he hissed in his careful French, "that my daughter's conduct has been satisfactory."

"Ah, Monsieur," cried Sister Mary Magdalene—her love for the child making her old voice sweet as music—"when one is eleven years one is not a miracle of good conduct. After all, when one's young, one's young. 'Toinette isn't always as you see her now, serious and *comme il faut*. Alas! far from it. But since she has been with us, 'Toinette has never—mind you, never—spoken one falsehood—no, not the littlest. I believe the truth was born in this child."

"My dear good lady!" exclaimed Oscar in an irritated whisper. "What you tell me is a calamity—a catastrophe. It's abnormal. No woman can get through life without a dash of deceit in her make-up. How else do you expect her to defend herself? She can't—no, no more than a cat can without claws."

The thin, seraphic call of the Angelus silenced him. And shouldering his hat, he bowed. "Adieu, Madame. Antoinette, be ready at ten to-morrow."

Tony faced this well-dressed stranger resolutely. She said, "I shall be ready."

"What! my little 'Toinette," reproved the good sister. "One doesn't speak brusquely like that. One says 'I shall be ready, my papa.'"

The child stood silent for a moment and then answered, almost sadly, "I shall be ready . . . Father."

## CHAPTER IV

AND that is how Tony, at eleven years old, went home to Virginia. She had hardly had time to climb every tree on the place when education, culture, and deportment appeared in the form of a Miss Belsize. The governess was pretty in a wholesale way, and though in reduced circumstances, of distinguished ancestry—trust Oscar for that.

Mr. Meredith took great interest in his daughter's studies. Every day he heard her recite, while he and Miss Belsize held the same book. One morning he even went so far as to send Tony for a magnifying glass, that he might study the map of Africa; and when she returned, what did she see but her father and Miss Belsize holding hands as though they were playing Ring around the Rosy.

"Antoinette," whispered Oscar, "Miss Belsize has promised to make me the happiest man on earth."

"How can she do that?" asked Tony.

"By becoming my wife."

"But Mother is your wife," said Tony.

"Your Mother is in heaven, Antoinette."

"Yes, and you never know. You and Miss Belsize might get there, too, and then what will you do when you all three meet?"

"A difficult child," murmured Miss Belsize, picking a thread off her skirt.

"I know what will happen," cried Tony, brightening. "If I get to heaven with the rest of you, you and Miss Belsize can stay together, and I'll go off with Mother."

Then came the new régime. Tony went to a day school at Richmond, and her stepmother, the ex-Miss Belsize, re-



furnished the old Meredith home. Something of the personality of the first wife, that still clung to the rooms like a delicate, persistent perfume, was blown away by the upholsterers and decorators. Eva's work basket, all the little belongings that make the dead so pathetic, vanished discreetly. The dear old parlor was ill at ease, bristling with brocade and ceremonious chairs. The only familiar left it was a miniature of Colonel Bouchier, Eva's grandfather, that remained to balance on the slippery surface of the double grand. The very chairs seemed like visitors; you expected them at any moment to make a bow to the fireplace, the only original piece of decoration in the room, and troop out by precedence, the armchairs first, the footstools last, creaking with upholstery and glue.

A stepmother, according to fiction, is a brutal egoist who tyrannizes over the children left to her care. Yet the second Mrs. Meredith showed no such tendencies. She was fond of Oscar's child, as indeed who was not, for there never was a more lovable little creature than Tony, with her towzled head and her eyes of a boy—singular eyes, that at moments became as tender as those of a grown woman.

Mrs. Meredith was kind, but hers was a narrow intellect. She had all the prejudices of mediocrity. Originality to her bordered on insanity; impulsiveness, on hysteria. She was one of those people who invariably back their own statements with the opinion of some celebrity. It was the Lord she quoted. Almost familiar she was in her references to Him. To hear her, one would have thought she was the Almighty's confidante. His ways were not inscrutable to her, and she held forth on her private information even at dinners and balls, until Oscar pointed out that the name of the Lord has not as much weight in social circles as that of certain other authorities. After that it was only to Tony that Mrs. Meredith quoted the Lord. On one occasion she declared the Almighty to be acutely pained by

Tony's obstinately wearing a certain disreputable reefer, dear to the child's heart, by reason of its many pockets and battered nautical buttons.

"The Lord is very much displeased to see you in that dreadful old coat," Mrs. Meredith enunciated with the distinct voice she kept for children, animals, and foreigners. "He thinks you a very naughty little girl."

To which Tony answered cheerfully, but with the brusqueness inherent in her, "Rubbish! The Lord has other things to think of. He doesn't care a rap——"

Now in her heart of hearts, Mrs. Meredith came gradually to the conclusion that Tony was mad. So she never talked with her stepdaughter as though the child had been a rational being; she never argued, she never discussed the why and wherefore of her commands; she merely reiterated and soothed.

The child's emotions, or so it seemed to Mrs. Meredith, were out of all proportion. On the death of any of the beasts on the farm, Tony's grief would do credit to a chief mourner, and at twelve years old she insisted on taking lessons of the veterinary, so as to fit herself, as she said, to be trained nurse to the animals.

An intrepid tom-boy was Tony, a desperate rider. Her Buffalo Bill feats, her stepmother suspected, showed an ignorance of danger that wasn't normal.

Another disquieting habit of Tony's was to stare at Mrs. Meredith, stare unflinchingly, as though struggling to come to a decision; and then suddenly, perhaps in the midst of a meal, she would spring up, bound across the floor, and fling herself on her stepmother's breast, like an affectionate bomb, exclaiming as though in an outburst of joy and relief, "I do love you; indeed, I do!"

In her stepdaughter still another trait struck Mrs. Meredith as showing a tendency to morbidness. Although the child was now grown a big girl and her own mother could

have never been more than a memory, mention of the dead woman's name often brought tears to Tony's eyes.

But Tony's crowning eccentricity, in Mrs. Meredith's judgment, was a craze for poetry, monologues, plays. Daily Tony pranced in the barn, shouting, spouting, ranting; and on one evening, never-to-be-forgotten, when Oscar was entertaining some potentates with tea on the lawn, Tony, from her room, was suddenly heard to break out in Ophelia's mad songs, which, as every one will remember, are not at all *jeune fille*.

Now Tony was not introspective, not morbid; she was simple and unanalytical; yet she felt sometimes, oh, only at moments, she was in her home an alien—not in the sense that her bread was grudged her, or that she didn't receive a sufficient share of affection—no; but what hurt her was that this affection seemed less directed to her personally than to her hereditary title of "only daughter in the household," a position of respect no doubt, equivalent to that of the posts that supported the porch.

Now Tony's dominant trait was her power of loving. The child had a passion of love to give. It was a torrent, this love; it wanted to surge from Tony's breast and give itself again and again to some other human. Both Oscar and Mrs. Meredith, Tony instinctively felt it, belonged to that order of persons to whom any display of emotion is acutely embarrassing. So the child kept what was in her heart for the being that had been dearest to her, for her own mother, the dear mother, only vaguely remembered yet infinitely cherished, infinitely regretted. That her father had married again, that every remembrance of the first wife was like a weed uprooted from his home, in no way embittered Tony. She knew that nature, ever on the march, allows of no eternal mourning, that the recurrent course of every hour causes us to betray those we have lost, those to whom, alas! no entire fidelity is possible, since merely

for the rest of us to go on living is in itself an unfaithfulness to our dead. Nevertheless, for herself, Tony tried to have another creed, and in her bedroom she stored the pitiable little belongings she had seen her mother handle familiarly.

At fifteen Tony was still constant, and it was then she bethought her of making a pilgrimage through her mother's early years, of which she knew nothing. For this purpose she chose an album of Oscar's, his social autobiography, a book pasted with newspaper clippings. The heavy volume in her arms, Tony climbed the ladder into the loft, and here, up to her chin in straw, she read of Miss Eva Bouchier's brilliant marriage to that gallant and typical gentleman, Oscar Meredith. The reporter described the young bride, veiled in hereditary lace, clinging to her husband's arm, all of which Tony perused with considerable pleasure, dreaming she heard the marriage bells the while. Next ensued columns upon columns, melodious with the music of balls, the laughter of good company, where Eva Meredith triumphed in young, irresistible beauty. Next an announcement of Tony's birth. Then again, more balls, more good company. And then, quite suddenly, in startling headlines, in bold, violent language, came the drama of Eva's life: her ride through the night in the train whose wheels had crushed out the breath of a man. For the crude and horrid story had made a great talk in its day, and though it must have offended Mr. Meredith to possess for a wife the heroine of such a *crime passionnel*, nevertheless he preserved all the newspaper columns in which figured an account of this melodrama in high life, for Oscar could never bring himself to destroy any paragraph which held his printed name.

With a shudder, Tony took her hands off the book as though it had been a corpse. Her outlook on love was revolutionized. Love between man and woman to Tony

at fifteen meant a nice home and dear little children to run about in it, and all the world attuned to the one word "Dearest." Such simple dreams must vanish before this printed horror, from which emanated that corruption of waste, of degradation, that taints all stories of self-destruction. It almost seemed to Tony as though through the verbose style of the reporter her mother was trying to warn her of danger, to tell her that love is only another name for suffering.

Solemnly Tony looked up to the rafters, and without considering that her vow was a little premature, she promised to barricade her heart against all dangerous, disturbing emotions, and to keep her liberty of spirit, and, somewhat calmer, she again cast down her eyes to the barn floor, where a cock strutted self-consciously among his hens.

After that, Tony was as free of love as the huntress Diana. Her indifference, perhaps, was the secret cause of the charm she possessed to the young men she met at Newport and at the Hot Springs. Be that as it may, when her girl friends gossiped of their affairs of the heart, Tony felt as detached, as superior, as must the goddess of the chase herself when she overheard her nymphs whispering of sentiment.

Besides, Tony had other things to think of. She was to be an actress, she wished it. How this longing had taken possession of her, inspired her dreams and obsessed her being, she couldn't have told you. It hadn't sprung on her suddenly, but had overcome her naturally, as she grew with each year. All the more mysterious it was, since the young girl had rarely been to the theater and herself never acted.

To do her justice, Tony was not stage-struck, since that common malady is made up of two weaknesses, both of which were alien to her nature, an inflated vanity and a sentimental interest in *matinée* heroes.

Joan of Arc, in the plains of Lorraine, heard whispers that directed her course. The church has an irresistible voice, the sea is in the blood of some men, and in Tony's veins was the stage, thrilling her with ecstasy, with regret, like the remembrance of a former life. She studied, she prepared herself as best she could. Her life became one long enchantment. Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw, Brioux, Henri Bataille—there wasn't a play she didn't know. Sometimes she read all night, and in the morning she felt a burning coal in each eye socket. When she was eighteen years old, an age that seemed to her of ripe experience and mature judgment, Tony asked for an interview with her father and stepmother.

They received her in the drawing-room, and very ornamental they were, seated at either side of the fireplace, like two effigies on an aristocratic tomb. Tony looked from one to the other, almost with compassion, and in a low, pained voice, as though she were breaking the news of a friend's death, she said:

"Father and Stepmother, I'm going on the stage."

"Oscar!" shuddered Mrs. Meredith, as though she had sat down on an asp.

Meredith had one trait in common with a drunken man—he never showed surprise. Tony's information simply caused him to slip down lower in his chair, one of his eyelids drooped, and he emitted a hissing sound like the whistling of a whipcord.

"And why, may I ask?" he whispered in a fine scorn, "why does my daughter, a girl of independent means, of the best blood in America, feel called on to prance before the public?"

"My poor Oscar!" his wife wailed. "Personally, I would rather see your daughter dead."

"Dead! I would rather see her in penal servitude!" The veins on Oscar's forehead grew dark as he struggled



to speak louder. "A Meredith exposing herself to be stared at for money!"

"My poor Oscar, your daughter is . . . unbalanced. I have always known it.

"Love of notoriety," she moaned, "that's what it is. Oh, Antoinette! if I thought you were just like other people, I should call you a wicked, wicked girl."

"The girls of this generation," Oscar, smiling bitterly, apostrophized Colonel Bouchier's miniature, "do they care if they grace or disgrace the station that it has pleased God to call them to? Pooh! not they. They have other things to think of. They have their careers, if you please."

A woman in Oscar's taste must combine the ephemeral delicacies of the humming bird with the more practical qualities of a brood mare.

"You will not allow it, Oscar. You will put your foot down," and Mrs. Meredith tapped the floor with her Louis XV heel.

"These are not feudal times, my dear. Antoinette has a small income from her mother which makes her independent. I have yet to learn, however, whether my daughter's talent inclines her to the vaudeville, the ballet, or the legitimate drama—that pleasure is in store for me still."

"My poor Oscar!"

"Believe me, Muriel, the girl will be a socialist next, an anarchist—she's dangerous."

The object of his fears, her arms crossed, a lock of dark hair falling over her brow, stood with lowered head, grave and powerful as a little Napoleon. She might have justified herself; she might have told with tumultuous eloquence of her ambitions, her longing, the necessity for her of the life she had chosen; she might have confessed the very real suffering it caused her to break with her father and step-mother, both of whom she had grown through propinquity to love. But Tony had learnt the futility of words; she

never struggled where a struggle was hopeless, so she continued silent, all the while gazing at her father.

"She intends," whispered Oscar, wringing his long hands like a woman, "to use my name as a means of advertisement with theatrical directors."

"No, no, Father." Unconsciously Tony lowered her voice until it was no louder than Meredith's. "Your name couldn't help me."

Oscar looked at his wife wildly.

"Muriel!" he gasped. "Now she says my name couldn't help her."

"No, Father, not to learn my business. I'm going away to work. I shall probably begin by playing a servant girl with a dirty face."

"Oscar!" said Mrs. Meredith somberly, "do you hear that? Your daughter's wish is to go on the stage with a dirty face!"

"And why not?" cried Tony, warming. "Haven't Talma and Kemble been black as pots to play Othello?"

"Paint one's face and be kissed in public by strange men—that's an actress's life," announced Mrs. Meredith sententiously, and she withdrew, shattered, behind a palm-leaf fan.

"In fifty years," Tony averred, "the stage will be as respected as any profession."

"My daughter is ahead of her time," whispered Oscar with a withering sarcasm. "*She* is no shallow, hollow girl of the world. *She* is an intellectual, brilliant spirit, that soars above her sphere."—All this in confidence to Colonel Bouchier's miniature. "And just to think," groaned Oscar, "that next winter she was to have made her début."

"Father," said Tony, with an almost maternal gentleness, "I should have been a disgrace to you. I should have been awkward and rough, I know it. You never could have made of me what I should have been; I am not fitted for the life."

“A Meredith not fitted for society!” Again Oscar appealed to Colonel Bouchier.

“It’s true, Father, I’m not. I can’t talk to strangers just because I have to. When I don’t love people I have no tact with them. When my heart doesn’t speak, I don’t know what to say to them.”

“Oscar! She might have made a brilliant match,” sighed Mrs. Meredith from behind the palm-leaf fan.

“Fiddlesticks!” said Tony. “All the brilliant matches you’ve wanted me to make have never cared a rap for me. Shall I tell you who has loved me best on earth, and I know it, though he never spoke a word to me; it’s the little lift boy at the Hot Springs last summer.”

“I have heard enough!” cried Mrs. Meredith, rising in a culminating agony. And she swept from the room, while Oscar held the door wide.

“I have one more thing to say,” whispered Oscar, smoothing his coat tails, “and then I think we may consider this painful interview terminated. You are, Antoinette, unfortunately free to lead what life you may see fit; but at least my name shall not figure on a theatrical program—you must change it.”

“I am sorry for that,” Tony answered. “A good name such as mine ought to help a girl to do her best work. But if it must be, it must be.”

“I see no reason,” ruminated Oscar, “for your writing to me. We will have nothing in common now. But stop a moment—God forbid I should be lacking in charity to my only child. The income your mother left you is small, very small. When you are in money difficulties is the only time I wish to be remembered by you.” And Oscar dismissed his daughter with an inclination of his well-groomed head.

Two weeks later, Tony was sailing away from America alone—no, not alone, for Samuel Pickwick went with her; and he wasn’t the only one who had offered; there wasn’t

an old darky on the Meredith place who wouldn't have gone to the end of the world to take care of "the Little Missy."

The first day on board the sun hadn't set before Tony knew every one. It was then she met Miss Potts—alias Mondragonie. Miss Mondragonie, an English actress, strongly resembled a school-teacher who, in a moment of aberration of the mind had made up her face hastily in a very bad light. This interesting artist declared she was returning from an epoch-making tour. "The rest of the company were not at all up to my level," admitted Miss Mondragonie, powdering her nose. "The company is stranded now in South Dakota. I, for the present, am going to Paris, to do a little pantomime and get some emotional atmosphere. Lovely, wicked Paree. One of the first men I ever loved lived in Paree. It's there I had my grand passion, as the French say."

Miss Mondragonie, in reality an old maid of unimpeachable virtue, suffered from a harmless mania. She longed to be regarded as an abandoned woman, whose lascivious life made the conduct of Cleopatra, Salome, or Lucretia Borgia seem like the sportive exuberance of a child.

The past that this dangerous woman kept behind her was littered—or so she declared—with lovers, suicides, wrecked homes, and early husbands. "I have a sweet, sweet infant," Miss Mondragonie would murmur. "Oh, it's all a sad, banal little romance,"—and she would hand out the photograph of a nice child with a bald head,—in reality her nephew, the son of a dentist in Clapham.

To a weakness for hasheesh, opium—all the Eastern drugs—Mondragonie modestly confessed. It was an education to see her look with one eye through a glass of wine, and then sniff, to judge of the bouquet. But it must be admitted that Miss Mondragonie never went further with a glass of wine than to smell it.

Through courageous diligence, however, she had acquired

a taste for tobacco. She smoked endless cigarettes, while she devoured the works of Elinor Glyn and Victoria Cross. She was also given to naughty, naughty French novels in too-dreadful yellow covers; and she let them lie about open at all the paragraphs that ended in dots. So thoroughly did Miss Mondragonie believe in her own depravity that she now and then actually persuaded one or two people into thinking her no better than she should be. At heart the modern Messalina was a simple, good-natured spinster of whom Tony grew fond.

The morning before landing at Cherbourg, "I am a passionate, unbridled creature," Miss Mondragonie confided, as she and Tony paced the deck. "I am so temperamental."

"It's too bad," sympathized Tony, who concluded from her companion's portentous, muffled tone that temperament must be a nervous affliction, like St. Vitus's dance.

Miss Mondragonie smiled pityingly, while in the high sea breeze she held on to a false front of hair. "You, my dear, will never make an actress until you acquire some experiences, some emotions. The Conservatoire, we'll hope, will develop your temperament, since the Parisian actress is beyond a doubt the ideal interpretress of passion."

"If it's necessary, I should love to have a what-do-you-call-it—a temperament," Tony acquiesced humbly, for Miss Mondragonie was to her still a priestess of the mysterious art to which her soul aspired.

"Gregers Webster would be the making of you," elocuted Miss Mondragonie through the wind; and she told of the touring school where students of the drama are grounded in the classics of the English stage. "I shall be with Gregers Webster myself after next autumn. Webster has implored me to play his heavy ladies—the tragic rôles, dear," Miss Mondragonie patronizingly explained, while with both hands she clung to her crimped aureole. She wore this

horse-hair wreath not of necessity, but through a general love of mystery and disguise.

When Tony understood that only a limited number of pupils were admitted to Webster's school, to be instantly dismissed if later proved incompetent, she became enthusiastic, and the warm-hearted Mondragonie promised her an eloquent letter of introduction to the acting manager.

The following evening, as the girls parted at the Gare St. Lazare in Paris, "I doubt if we meet again in 'la belle France'"—since her foot had touched ground at Cherbourg Miss Mondragonie was grown extremely French—she now spoke with an accent and gesticulated as though she were learning to swim. "*Adjew*—but one instant. I have something to propose. When you are done with the Conservatoire, come and make me a visit in my little nest at Clapham Junction."

"But I ought to be where Webster is. He'll want to see me. He'll not take me on trust."

"*Parfaitement*. You can go in to London a day or two before I do, present my letter to Webster, pass your examinations; then I'll join you in the station and we'll start off on tour together. What do you say, *Peteat?*" Miss Mondragonie meant "Petite." She invariably anglicized the French endearments with which she enriched her conversation. "Tony, tell me, will you or won't you come next autumn and make me a visit?"

"With all the pleasure in life, Mondragonie dear; but where shall I come? England's a big island."

"Impractical *artiste* that I am!" and the hospitable spinster handed Tony a card on which was engraved one of Venus's doves and underneath:

MONDRAGONIE,  
Sub Rosa Villa,  
Clapham Junction



Had Mr. Meredith been able to witness the following year of Tony's life, the blue blood would have frozen in his aristocratic veins. Never again could he have held his head high, had he once seen his child working hammer and tongs among the Conservatoire rabble—yes, just as though she had her bread to earn, jostled by absinthe swigging men, elbow to elbow with girls who had nothing more to learn of vice and sorrow, hand in glove with all the riff-raff of Paris—the talented riff-raff, all the more degenerate.

Oscar's daughter had her home—irony of fate—up flights and flights of stairs, under the eaves, with a disgraced workgirl for her friend, and the swallows for her neighbors, and on her window sill she kept a garden, just like any Parisian grisette. Her friend Miquette had bought the shrubs, the flowers, and the plants gave out what perfume they had as innocently as though they had been chosen by a Princess of the Blood Royal.

To a daughter who made her home in an attic Mr. Meredith might have confessed at a pinch, since an attic invariably smacks of literature and nobility in disguise, but had Oscar known of Tony's subsequent sojourn in that very cockney milieu—the Villa Sub Rosa, Clapham Junction, his fastidious sense of decorum would have been utterly outraged.

An eternal floraison of dish-cloths and undergarments drape the porch of the Villa Sub Rosa, and it gets all the soot and the smells and the garbage coming its way. The servant-girl had just gone on strike, thrown her dirty apron on the floor, kicked the door-mat into the road, and boarded the first train into London, when Tony arrived. Miss Mondragonie received her guest without embarrassment and pressed upon Tony some of the superfluous duties of the maid-of-all-work. As gay as a thrush, whistling and singing like that bird itself, Tony might have been seen of a morning, sweeping the Villa Sub Rosa in a reckless, orig-

inal manner, while Miss Mondragonie, ever alive to the picturesque side of country life, supervised the oven in a Leghorn garden hat.

Miss Mondragonie's mamma, Mrs. Potts, a podgy lady of fluctuating moods, bore a striking resemblance to the lamented Queen Victoria. In the morning Mrs. Potts' spirits were as austere as those of an abbess during a prolonged fast, and her h's were perilous, though emphasized; but after a day of hobnobbing with a little brown bottle that sat at her elbow like a familiar, Miss Mondragonie's mamma was of a bacchanalian gaiety and her h's few and far between. Then Tony would come forward, and with her sturdy young arms, hoist her garrulous old hostess up to bed. No, there was no doubt about it, Fate was playing a practical joke when she gave Tony to Oscar for a daughter.

But for all Oscar's erudition in matters social, there was one patent of nobility of which he was quite unconscious,—one might almost call it “the aristocracy of souls”; and, though he never guessed it, his daughter was of this Order. From Tony's every movement, from the unconscious gaze of her luminous young eyes, emanated a purity that made those she met respect her, a simplicity that called forth what was best in others, a trustfulness that caused her to be waited on as only those are served who inspire love.

Even when she made mistakes—unconventional, foolish mistakes—when, for instance, she walked the London streets close on midnight, visited a cinematograph in the suspicious neighborhood of Piccadilly, and there struck up a conversation with a total stranger,—no, not even when, impulsive, enthusiastic, she brought her stranger home to supper—could one have found it in one's heart to reprove Tony or protest with her; no, no more than if the Venus de Milo were to come to life one of us poor mortals would feel called on to hand the goddess a chemise.

That night, after Felton left her, Tony stood at her

window. She thought of the future, of the big fight before her. From the street arose disquieting noises, the hollow howl of the auto horn, the growl of alcoholic voices, the low, vibrant whistle that seems the signal for an attack, all the mysterious, cruel sounds that emanate at night from the heart of a great city.

In the one and only armchair Pickwick reposed, breathing heavily, we will call it. The little dog's paws twitched and he whined in his sleep.

"Dear Samuel," thought Tony, "he's dreaming of home—I can see that. He thinks he's chasing the rabbits that always run faster than he, and their impudent tails are bouncing on before him."

## CHAPTER V

EARLY next morning, a boisterous December morning, Tony, under the patronage of Pickwick, might have been seen marching down Piccadilly as brisk as you please. She was on her way to Webster's office in Shaftesbury Avenue.

"Good-morning, loidy," groaned an individual with a crêpe hat and a very large red nose, who leant upon a picturesque broom and adorned the crossing.

"Good-morning," said Tony, smiling like April, "and if I can find a penny you shall have it." She put her hand in her right pocket, she put her hand in her left, she burrowed about and got hold of a sixpence. "It's only twelve cents," thought Tony, and the crossing-sweeper got the sixpence.

"I 'ope as you'll 'ave a lucky dy, loidy," snuffled out from under the crêpe hat.

Tony felt sure from the manner of the crossing-sweeper that he took an interest in her, so she smiled trustingly upon him and answered: "Well, I'm coming back this same way; I'll just let you know how I get on." And off she went with her hands in her pockets and her nose in the air, Pickwick swaggering in her steps.

In an hour back she came with her nose even more in the air, and Pickwick strutting behind her as though he were the biggest dog in the street. As she passed the crossing-sweeper, she made—well, it must be called—a face. It signified plainly "I'm crowned with success."

"Very nice, I'm sure, loidy." The large red nose leant in a fatigued manner against the broom.

Tony came to a standstill. She ransacked her pockets

and fished out a shilling. Now it was madness to give a shilling to the *crêpe* hat, and Tony knew it. So she looked very hard at the shilling and wondered if a beggar ever had change.

"That's a 'andsome dorg, loidy," said the crossing-sweeper, who was a clever sweeper.

Tony showed no undue elation. "He's an interesting dog," she admitted.

Then the *crêpe* hat coughed, a hollow, sepulchral cough. Tony put the shilling in her left hand, and then in her right, and then into the hands of the wily cockney.

Tony had found Mr. Webster in a cubby hole of a room under the roof, looking up heraldry devices for chain armor. She had instantly felt attracted to this idealist who, for thirty years, in the face of discouragement, in spite of musical comedy and the cinematograph, has kept the Shakesperian banner flying. Never was there a finer head—the brow of Dante, that seems to need the laurel wreath; the poet's eyes, too—dark, dilated; the slightly drooping nose; the chin, firm as an athlete's.

Webster had listened somewhat absently as Tony recited her hopes, her ambitions, and she experienced for the first time a sensation she was to learn to know all but too well through future visits to managers,—the feeling of being a wound-up machine that must work itself out. Because she had come for an interview, she was to talk until she had talked herself dry, and be off, neither the worse nor the better for her monologue. Among other things, Tony said in her confiding way, "—and if you give Henry whatever his number is, do let me play Joan of Arc and come in bareback, on a bareback horse I mean." And it was then that the manager began to prick up his ears, for the Webster company was famous for its athletic members.

To be a Websterite, you must not only possess a fine voice

and clear elocution: firm nerves must be yours and staunch muscles. In fact, there is a fable to the effect that Mr. Webster's first question, when interviewing an actor, is not "What have you played?" but "Are you good at hockey?" And indeed, the Webster hockey team is the terror of towns on the tour.

"So you ride?" asked Webster, fixing Tony with his great, visionary eyes. And she told him of the Kentucky horses, the long-legged hunters that eat the blue grass.

"How the animals do draw one together, make one sympathetic! I'll show you my dog." And Tony went downstairs to fetch Pickwick, whom she had left in charge of the hall keeper. Samuel must have made a good impression on the manager, for Gregers Webster engaged Tony at one pound, ten shillings a week, traveling expenses and school fees defrayed. She had to work for the money, you may be sure. She was to be peasant, lady-in-waiting, infuriate populace, angry voices off, a fury in *The Tempest*, a harpy on the walls in *Henry Vth*. She was to down *Coriolanus* with a hideous roaring, and to shout "Ave Brutus!" in *Julius Cæsar*.

Next morning it was raining as it can only rain in London when you're off for a journey. In Victoria Station wraiths in ulsters hurried past, their boots squeaking in the wet; and Tony herself came gamboling through the puddles, tugging Pickwick after her. From afar she located the Webster luggage, piled high, starred with flaming labels, and close to this fortification of trunks she found *Mondragonie* seated on a bonnet box.

"Congratulations!" cried the actress, with the easy enthusiasm of the *mime*. And she rose up in a billowy plaid overcoat.

"I'm coming sure enough," Tony beamed, her pink face all bedewed with rain. And *Mondragonie* smiled a welcome from under the brim of an outrageous hat, a sort of plateau



where a molting bird was striving to hatch a bunch of cherries.

"Get in here," cried the hospitable Websterite. And she boosted Pickwick, then Tony, into a third-class compartment marked "Webster's Theatrical Touring Company. Reserved." Here were installed already, with their supplementary valises, luncheon baskets, handboxes, paper parcels, a young man, three women, and two children.

"Who'll see to my trunk?" asks Tony, clasping Pickwick to her heart, and standing among a network of feet and legs.

"The management," quoth Mondragonie sumptuously.

Two of the travelers then made room for Tony, who thanked them and sat down, holding Samuel on her knees.

"There goes Pa," says Mondragonie, looking out of the window. "Pa" meant Gregers Webster. It was a pet name given him by his company for his big, warm heart. Tony, glancing sideways, saw the manager loping through the rain with the muscular trot of a red Indian, a valise in either hand.

Others of the company passed and repassed. All had the "pros," indefinable look which does not consist only in long hair and blue chins—two quite unusual features in stage folk, by the way—nor in declamatory speech alone, nor bigness of gesture, but in a certain expression in the eye. Animal tamers, hypnotizers, have the same glance,—a glance vital, indomitable, and, in the actor's case, far younger than his physique would lead one to expect. For the body quickly shows the wear and tear of stage life, through eternally waiting in the wings the shoulders take to a slovenly droop, the grease paint riddles the face, either creasing it or feeding it a soggy fat; the hot black burns the lashes, the grimaces leave their stigma, and the foot-lights seem to bleach; then never a meal at the given hour, a snack here, a gulp there; always late, always hastening;

board a train for a flying matinée, three "quick changes," and a deaf dresser: Skurry,—hurry! Hurry,—why, it eats the actor, tissues and bones; it's the wolf that has him always at the throat.

The engine gives a piercing scream and the Websterites dart into their compartments like rabbits into their burrows. Shuddering, the train trails through the station, out towards the open, where, beyond the glass roof, the rain falls in a cataract. All along the platform actors out of a job, old stage chums left behind, wave good-by.

"Well, ta-ta, dearie. Take care of yourself."—"Hope you go off this season, old dear."—"Buck up, show 'em what's what."—"Make a hit, Lady Vere-de-Vere."—"By-bye! I will now sing you that plaintive little ditty entitled 'Lanoline,' or 'Squeeze Me and I'll Come Out.'"

A tunnel engulfs the train. Tony has put her arms around Pickwick, and under her clasped hands she feels the little dog's heart beating in the smothering dark. All at once an opalescent light shows at the window, increasing like the dawn; through the smoke and rain the boardings loom once more.

Then frankly, without lowered eyelashes and side glances, but with a straight, hardy look, Tony stared at each of her traveling companions in turn. She began on her left with a Miss Vesta Jones, familiarly known as "Jonesey," the daughter of a Welsh clergyman. Jonesey had russet cheeks and a simple air and was renowned for her conscience. She was the elocution teacher of Mr. Webster's school. Like many of the Welsh, she had so high a voice that whenever she spoke Tony looked up instinctively, expecting to find Miss Jones in the baggage rack. Jonesey had been on the stage half a decade, and though she was a human flute, she had so far played only superior, but mute, ladies-in-waiting. The conscientious creature was now absorbed in learning Mark Antony's speech, "Friends, Romans, Coun-

trymen." "For I have heard," says Jonesey, "it has never yet been properly rendered."

Beyond, in the corner seat, lolled an elegant, languid youth, ostentatiously reading Oscar Wilde's "Dorian Gray." On his sunny head, to guard against the smut, he wore a mauve skull cap. At intervals he stole a glance at the window, at the reflection of his face that hovered over the fleeting panorama. Like Narcissus of old his own image seemed to plunge him in ecstasy. His book would slip to his knees, his long lashes sweep his cheeks, while he looked about to swoon in the contemplation of his charms. This was Mr. Esmé Eglantine, the Juvenile Lead, the darling of all the matinée girls from Bonny Scotland through the Midlands to the Isle of Erin.

Opposite, a modest-spoken little woman bent her mouse-colored head close to the stocking she was darning. On each side a strapping boy plucked at her sleeve, bleating questions, and the maternal drudge turned her face right and left to attend to her cormorants. These big-jawed children with bullet heads played the Princes in the Tower, fairies, etc. They were called in the Company, "Ham" and "Ham, Junior," after the apes of international reputation. Their mother, a miracle of domesticity, was known by her husband's Christian name, as Mrs. Jack, and sometimes—for she was the company's solo dancer—as "Jumping Jack." Poor soul, she bled herself in the provinces, so that "her boy," as she called him, could make a splurge as a London actor. "Jack's playing in this," "Jack's made a hit in that," she would say, and her love for him went naked in her worn voice. To help him to feed his children, the gaunt cubs, this mother donned a ballet skirt and skipped before the footlights. The incarnation of home love, she was never born for the stage, a profession where egoism, the acutest form of self-worship, with all it entails of unscrupulousness and cruelty, is almost essential to success.

The only other occupant of the carriage was a handsome, bouncing lass, commonly called, for some unknown reason, "Louisa Frou-Frou." Her mother, a hairdresser, had told her to choose between typing or the stage as a means of livelihood. Louisa Frou-Frou had preferred the latter profession, and as she was big and ornamental, Webster engaged her to pose in the Forum scenes in a toga. The rest of her time she lolled in the wings, talked stage slang, and ate her head off.

She was ruminating now, heavy-eyed, glancing sideways at the retreating country. "Mondragonie, old sport, look 'ere,"—Louisa Frou-Frou's h's at times played her false—"shall we share digs in Manchester?" Manchester was the Webster company's first halt on tour. "Ten—lucky number—Paradise Street. Sitting-room, double bedroom, bath, and piano—w'at Oh! Landlady fond of *pros*. Eh, what, Mondragonie, does that suit you, old dear?"

"Would there be room for Samuel and me in No. 10 Paradise Street?" queried Tony, her head on one side like a friendly squirrel.

"You'll have to ask the landlady yourself," Louisa Frou-Frou blustered, in the bullying tone due from an old Websterite to an American amateur.

The large-hearted Mondragonie intervened: "Tony, don't you fret. I'll see No. 10 Paradise Street puts you up."

And now for the first time Tony heard the real stage lingo, a dialect by itself. Much is said of the breadth of bohemian life, its widening effect on the intellect. As a matter of fact, artists, like all egoists, are generally a mentally narrow people, who talk nothing but shop, and who turn gloomy, abstracted, when they and their careers are not discussed. During the journey Tony was to learn of stage feuds, theatrical vendettas. Mrs. Jack told how in a certain play her husband was always cut out of a "round,"—in the vernacular, a clap,—by his jealous co-star. The

characters of all the prominent managers were diagnosed; they were beaten all, was the general screaming up. Well, all except Webster, perhaps, of whom these gossips spoke not unfavourably, though they criticised his methods and recast all his plays for him; and through their tittle-tattle ran an undertone of complaint. The old days were always the best with the actor. Eglantine, in a voice seraphic, vibrant as Sarah Bernhardt's, told what a triumph his Hamlet had proved in Australia, - now Webster had appropriated the part, - whereupon his hearers cried "Shame!" hoping to be sympathized with in their turn; and each confided a grievance.

Next followed a discussion as to the best method of obtaining a "round" on an exit. Slamming a door was voted a crude, though unfailing, trick; "but only fit for a Saturday night," Louisa Frou-Frou concluded, - for you must know that every day of the week the provincial theaters have a different audience that must be especially catered to. Monday is the Butchers' and Bakers' night; Tuesday the Linen Drapers'; Wednesday come the Grocers; Thursday the Publicans; Friday all the smart folk; Saturday matinées, Schools and Spinners; Saturday night, the hoy polloy, generally drunk and delightful to play to. All this is probably a survival of the guilds. These various audiences teach versatility, for what might appeal to the Publican, for instance, would probably offend the Saturday matinée Spinner.

Tony, with wide eyes and parted lips, hugging Pickwick against her solid little chest, absorbed every word.

"She's never been on the stage—why, she hasn't even got any grease paints!" And with a classic sweep of the arm, Mondragonie designated Tony as one might point to an infant found naked on a curbstone.

Tony having thus been introduced, the pros proceeded to patronize her. "What! She didn't even know how to make up?"



"Why, no. Must I paint my face my own self?" cries the novice, aghast.

"Well, who did you suppose would do it—the scenic artist?" jibes Louisa Frou-Frou. And the old staggers swamp Tony with advice. "For background, try Leichner's 1, 2, and 5 mixed."—"What! are there as many shades?"—"Some sixty-five or so. For color, carmine 3, carmine 1, and dark rose. For the eyes, blue, black, and lake. For the palms of the hands, yellow ochre,"—etc., etc. Bewildered by the intricacies of her new profession, Tony now felt herself an amateur indeed.

All the while the train raced toward Manchester, rocking on the rails as only a theatrical train going at full tilt on a Sunday, can rock. The engine screeched through the Black District, past coaling villages, by belching chimneys, on through the corrupted country. At four o'clock a fog drowned the scenery and the landscape showed only as an iridescent haze. Tony had known some forlorn moments since she left home, but never a sense of such acute loneliness as gripped her now in this stuffy railway carriage, under the bold eye of the burner. What was this life towards which she was rushing through the night? Could she make good in it? Was she brave enough? The drumming of her heart oppressed her. She felt, it must be confessed, very helpless and little. A hard, competitive people, these actors, to judge from their talk. And yet—she glanced at her fellow travelers, who all, save Mrs. Jack, lay prone in the character-revealing abandon of sleep. No, no conquering Napoleonic heads, these; but simple noodles, nodding in the pathos of unconsciousness. Eglantine, the young juvenile, smiled in his dreams, as harmless and pretty as a valentine; Jonesey pillowed her cheek on her Shakespeare, —a sober, decent Shakespeare that might have passed for a Bible; Louisa Frou-Frou showed but as a bundle in a Burberry coat, while Mondragonie, forgetting to look devil-



ish, suggested in her slumber a costumed sheep, one almost expected her to bleat from under the brim of her hat. Only Mrs. Jack had no time to rest. Each of her knees served as a pillow for her boys, while her deft, somewhat red, little hands darned, mended, patched, with all the haste of poverty and the perseverance of love. Pickwick also refused to sleep, and from pure contrariness. He disliked travel. At moments drowsiness overcame him and he would topple; but instantly recovering himself, he would swell out his cheeks with their bristling whiskers, and stare at Tony with a sulky eye.

As the train halted in the by-stations, the *pros* would wake, as noisy as canaries disturbed in the night, and skurry off on the wings of greed to the refreshment counter. These expeditions were headed by Mrs. Jenks, the Wardrobe Mistress, a fat virago, who re-entered the train after every outing, a bottle of stout to the good. In these interims, Jimmy, the call boy, raced along the footboard, jotting down the company's addresses on tour, while Saul, Mr. Webster's dresser, the prototype of an elderly cupid, booked all orders referring to luggage. The platform swarmed with the Webster school. Lank lads paced to and fro, dragging their toes in the approved stage walk; a group of hoydens practised fainting, while two ardent young students had a bout of fencing with their walking sticks.

"Who are these girls coming?" asked Tony, pointing to the window. And she was told that the sandy one was Miss Patsy Groggarty, a dear soul, Prompter, and All Sounds off—that is to say, she regulated the thunder, the lightning, etc.; and the dark Jewess, striding at her side, Miss Ruth Latimer, the Heavy Lady. The latter had a sort of stormy beauty, and as she came level with the window, Tony saw her full lips chapped with rouge and contorted by simulated passions.

"That girl can act," thought Tony. And the train set

off at its break-neck pace once more. Mrs. Jack took up her stocking, and the other Websterites fell asleep, as though by magic.

Another tunnel, to judge by the hollow rattling of the wheels. Tony made a frame of her hands and tried to peer out. Compact blackness; only against the dark window the figure of some one inside the train was reflected. She turned. A stranger was standing at the door of the compartment, looking in. Her glance got entangled with his somehow, and for an instant they stared each other straight in the eyes with that inquisitive, almost brutal look a man and woman sometimes exchange before they know each other by name. Then he moved and went on down the corridor.

"Who's that young man?" Tony asked of Mrs. Jack.

"Didn't see him, dearie. What's he like?"

"He has queer eyes—I don't mean crossed, or anything like that; but,—well, I can't explain it—peculiar-looking eyes."

"Can't say as I recognize who you mean, dearie. Had he red hair?"

"Blood red, just as though his mother had hennaed hers and he had inherited the color from her."

"That's David Hearn."

"Is he clever, Mrs. Jack?"

"*Rather!* Haven't you ever heard of David Hearn? My word! he's one of our biggest sculptors."

"A sculptor, is he? What's he doing here, then?"

"Oh, the stage is a study of his. He does some play-writing, too.—There, Ham, dear; there, mother's boy. Comfy?—He's got a brain, David Hearn has."

"Anyhow he's no gentleman," yawned Louisa Frou-Frou, burrowing in search of a softer resting-place.

"Oh, come now," Mrs. Jack protested, "his father's Lord Finister."

"Just so; and what business has the son of a belted earl, an aristocrat, mind you, that makes quids and quids a year on his stone images, to come and pinch the salary of *poor* what need the money? Low! I call it." And Louisa Frou-Frou punched her valise—kneaded it for a pillow. "A nasty-tempered fellow, this Hearn, treating you like a Leading Lady one day, giving you the cold haw-haw the next—I've no use for him."

"Well, there's something about him I don't like," assented Tony. "No," she firmly concluded, as the train swooped into Manchester, "I don't like him at all."

## CHAPTER VI

HIS Majesty's Opera House, Manchester, was as damp, cold, and pestiferous as only a theater at rehearsal hours can be. The stage door, a mere hole in the wall, gave on a yard—a cobbled alley rather—littered with manure from the stable opposite and cleft by a foul gutter. Into this court, Tony amongst them, filed the Websterites the morning after their journey. They found two carts at a standstill before the theater, and the stage carpenter, assisted by the property man,—familiarily “Props,”—supervising the unloading of the scenery, while to the left of the stage door, behind a grating, lurked a blear-eyed individual partaking of stout, with a black cat at his elbow.

Each Websterite, after giving his name, would ask in passing, “Anything for me, Hall Keeper?” whereupon the beery one, still foamy at the mouth, would throw out the key of the actor's dressing-room and perhaps a letter. By turn, then, every player complimented the black puss, whose phosphorescent eyes glowed behind the grating. Cats are the mascotte, the fetish, of stage folk; no theater is without one; an actor would rather slap his grandmother than fail in respect to the feline race.

The hall keeper had no letter for Tony, but he gave her a key big enough for a warder. She took it in both hands and behind Mondragonie she edged her way down the tortuous corridor into the bowels of the theater. Her heart now beat tumultuously. She felt somehow she was turning her back on all that had once made her life. She thought of Pickwick, of how she had left him in lodgings wailing his heart out to the chandelier. She groped on,

feeling her way, burrowing along. On either hand the walls sweated damp; with every step she took she became more conscious of a singular smell, a rotten, yet exhilarating odor, like the breath of autumn. The corridor was as black as the catacombs, save here and there where a wan light hung over the poster of another century, or lit up a wood-cut, the picture of some lost artist. Kemble and Siddons were to be seen here, gesticulating on the walls; Grimaldi, grimacing as Harlequin; and in a skirt like a powder-puff, Taglioni poised on her toes.

"This way to the dressing-rooms," shouted a voice in the intestinal blackness. Jimmy, the call boy, it was, heading the procession. Tony found herself stumbling up a flight of steep, slippery stairs. The next thing she knew she was blinking under the sky-light, the sun streaming down on her.

An attic, called the wardrobe, stretched before her. With its cement floor and whitewashed beams, it seemed as bright and narrow as a street in Cairo. From the door to the further wall was stretched a clothes line, to which hung a motley array of medieval garments. Here, reeking of camphor, swung ruffs, tights, brocaded cloaks, hooped skirts, topboots, hats from the Scotch bonnet to the Renaissance toque. Along the floor were heaped spears, shields, broad swords, pikes, greaves, hatchets too, and secretive helmets—all the armory of the supers. Against the wall the theatrical hampers stood on file. These vast wicker baskets were labeled according to their contents in gigantic letters—some *The Wives*, "The Merry Wives of Windsor," others *Hamlet P.*, for "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark." A tray of stage jewelry held the center of the room, imperial tiaras, papal gloves, orders of the Golden Fleece, Koh-i-Noors, all gleaming together like the cast-off scales of a dragon, while in the furthest corner hung a sight that might cause a novice to draw back as affrighted as Mrs. Bluebeard when she

opened a certain closet. A clump of wigs, these, black or tawny heads of hair, with gaping apertures for faces. Under these mortuary tresses, on a hamper marked "2 Gents," "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," sat Mrs. Jenks, the Wardrobe Mistress, a piece of tape tied round her knees to ward against the draught, blowing on her cold fingers, and darning a pair of scarlet tights.

All the dressing-rooms gave on this wardrobe. Tony, by means of the mammoth key, opened the door assigned her. She found herself in a stuffy cupboard, furnished with five boards on trestles, five stools, and five looking-glasses, the latter as mildewed as though they had been stored at the bottom of a well. A notice facing her, read: "The artists will oblige the manager by extinguishing the light before going on stage. They will kindly refrain from writing their names on the walls, from smoking and spitting. *Nota Bene:* The Dresser will bring from the theater bar all stimulants the artists may require."

Small as the room proved, Tony had to share it with Mrs. Jack, Mondragonie, Louisa Frou-Frou, and Jonesey. The girls came in, chose their places, and deposited their make-up boxes, containing cosmetics, false eyelashes, all the actor's war paint.

Meanwhile Saul, Mr. Webster's dresser, a genial body, as rotund as Santa Claus, had come floundering up the stairs, short of breath, though much invigorated by his visit to the public house opposite, "The Vines." On entering the wardrobe, he offered to sing "The Heart Bowed Down," but catching sight of the Sergeant—an Irish petty officer who went on tour with the company, drilling the supers and training the school in gymnastics, fencing, broad swording, stage falls, etc.—the intrepid Saul volunteered to fight the soldier with or without the gloves. From the dressing-rooms all the company flocked to see the sport; but hardly had Saul got his coat off and rolled up his sleeves to the



acclamations of all, when his attention became transfixed by Mrs. Jenks on the hamper, and the flighty old bacchanal advanced to embrace her, whereupon, snatching up a fencing mask that lay at hand and fitting into it her fat face, the Wardrobe Mistress defied him. Mrs. Jenks' stratagem was applauded by the company; from the heavy leads down to the call boy, they were all her toadies. In this woman's keeping were the clean ruffs, the holeless tights—why, even wash day was of her choosing, so, perforce, the Websterites flattered her, cringed to her, and she terrorized over them, as fickle a tyrant as Nero. Under the terrible eye of the Wardrobe Mistress, Saul, halfway to her, halted and turned tail.

"I don't know what you're all adoin' loafin' about 'ere. It's a good hour since I seen the guv'nor settin' on the stage as gentle as a lamb. 'Where's the others, Saul?' he says; 'I'm waitin' to re'earse the Shrew. You go fetch 'em.'"

"Why couldn't you have told us before, you footling old sot, you?" cried Jimmy, the call boy, and he plunged down the stairs, all the company diving after him.

Only one very old actress, the godmother of the company as it were, familiarly known as "Granny Firkin," stood still, leaning on her cane. Tony loitered a moment, wanting to offer her a hand, but was cut out by David Hearn, the sculptor, who helped the old lady down the stairs step by step.

It was with the reverence of the pilgrim approaching Mecca that Tony now stepped on the stage. She felt as the religious do in church, as the mother by the cradle. All this was familiar, heart-stirring as a home-coming. It was almost as though in some former life the theater had been her house. It stimulated her—this smell of dust, rotting velvet, and *size*. The footlights, red, blue, and orange, shone cozily, like the crystal balls of a Christmas tree. But the

auditorium kept dark, black as a forest in a fairy tale, peopled with squatting shapes—the seats swathed in holland. This uneasy gloom had a voice—the orchestra, hesitating over the tunes of the night, while in the flies the property men called to each other like sailors in the rigging.

Miss Patsy Groggarty, the Irish girl Tony had noticed at the station, the Prompter, Under-stage-manager, and General Teetotum, was pacing the stage, calling "Beginners for the Shrew, please!" A table stood near the footlights, a chair on either side. Miss Groggarty sat down, holding the big prompt book on her knees. The other chair was taken by Mr. Webster, who seemed twitching to get to work.

"Come, we must give a good show at Manchester, and if you ladies and gentlemen have forgotten as much of the play as I have—Well, first scene, please."

The men threw down their cigarettes, the girls laid aside their reticules, and in a portentous silence the rehearsal began. It was a singular sight. In their McFurlands and overcoats the actors paraded with the graces of the Elizabethan period, while Mr. Webster, nervous as an umpire at a game, sprang up, watching, dodging, squatting down to peer into the performers' faces. Every three words he would interrupt, holding up his hand with a cry like a man who sees foul play.

"Mr. Eglantine, have you a father?" he cried to the juvenile lead who was spouting away.

"I have, sir."

"Then, my lad, when you say the lines I have just interrupted, this phrase—'And by my father's love and leave am armed'—think of him, my boy. You see, in the play you love him. You are an emotional Italian. You venerate your father. He's on a par in your heart with the holy saints. You're vibrating with filial love, understand?"

"Quite so, sir," replied Eglantine, polite but unconvinced; and having coughed, swallowed, stretched his long white

throat out of his lawn stock, he warbled "And by my father's love and leave am armed"—

"No, no; you've not got it, my boy. If you can't *feel* it, try a mechanical effect. Draw out the vowel."

But it was above all the bits of stage "business" that took time, duels, for instance, were rehearsed by the hour, the actors counting their strokes aloud:

"I hit you right, I hit you left, I back, I plunge, I back. One, two; one, two; I stagger, I fall."

"But you fall without your feet rising, eh, Eglantine?" "Pa" hinted, bending over the body. "You're out of condition, my lad. You're panting too much for a corpse." He said this simply, with no desire to be funny, and the company, yawning in the gloom, never cracked a smile.

As for the love scenes, they fascinated Tony. When crotchety, they were rehearsed mechanically at first. The lover would say, at full voice, suiting the action to the words, "I kneel, I kiss her once, twice. I rise. I kiss her *ad lib.*," and always the phrase came back like a refrain, a litany. "I kneel, I kiss her once, twice, I rise, I kiss her *ad lib.*"

Tony judged the men of the company far cleverer than the women, the comedians irresistible, and Eglantine so degenerately affected as to acquire a certain personality. His voice, too, was seraphic, soul-stirring as a violin. Mrs. Jack, having laid down her darning, now frisked about the stage with all the light-heartedness of theatrical youth, while Mondragonie, waving her spare utilitarian looking arms, languished in Delsarte graces. But of all the girls Tony decided that only the dark Jewess, Ruth Latimer, had the divine spark.

When the pupils, Tony amongst them, danced on to the stage as the marriage guests, Pa was everywhere at once, teaching each student a particular bit of business, showing how to be old, how to be young, he acted every part in the

play, he was as alive as an electric wire and indomitably good-tempered. When came Granny Firkin's cue, he led her down to the footlights, smiling at her tenderly. Tony was attracted to Granny Firkin, as indeed she always was to very old or very young people. But not quite knowing what to say to this matriarch of the theater, she lingered close to her, nodding and smiling at her in a manner ingenuous and touching. She was exceedingly pleased when Granny Firkin, having finished her speeches and regained her chair, asked "You're new, aren't you, dear?"

"Oh, very new, Granny Firkin—Mrs. Firkin, I mean."

"Call me 'Granny,' I like it. I've been in this company thirty years. Every one else in it seems to me young now. I could be grandmother to the greater number of you, and I never meet any one as old as I am." And in her soft, droning voice she told Tony the history of the Webster Company. Thirty years ago the fight; at first touring to empty houses, then the solid work, the fine plays, getting a hearing. Why, almost every famous player had been enrolled under Webster's banner,—Ash, Brayton, Lang, Brydon, Filippi,—yes, Pa had taught the provinces what Shakespeare had to say and given England its best actors.

"There's a clever young man," she concluded, pointing to the stage. "He's got the stuff of an actor in him; but," she added with a sigh, "he has too many irons in the fire." She was referring to David Hearn, who at this instant—Pa having gone off into the wings to try some new property swords with the Sergeant—was having a violent discussion with Miss Groggarty over the rendering of a certain line in the rôle of Biondello.

"That is the word we always emphasize," Patsy Groggarty kept doggedly repeating.

"But it's preposterous," cried young Hearn, shrugging his shoulders like a foreigner. "Do you mean to tell me that the first imbecile who plays a part molds that part forever?"

"Dan Leno was the creator of Biondello. He had a bigger reputation than you have, Mr. Hearn. I advise you to stick to his reading." Miss Groggarty spoke in the level voice of one who keeps to dogma.

"Mr. Webster," the young man protested, as Pa strode toward him waving a foil, his sleeve turned back.

"Yes, yes; I heard. After all, Miss Groggarty, we're some ninety-five years ahead of Dan Leno, some ninety-five years wiser, I hope. Give us your reading, Mr. Hearn, and we'll choose."

"That's the way to get the best out of people," approved Granny Firkin to Tony.

"Conceited amateur," whispered Eglantine viciously. "Imagine arguing with the management."

Just then Hearn came up to Granny Firkin, glowering at her from under his eyebrows with a hang-dog look.

"Well, David," she asked, "did you get your way?"

"No; it seems I let the scene down. I haven't the lungs to make an actor." He was evidently disgruntled. To see him the prey of a grievance, so sulky, so uncontrolled, Tony's bad opinion of him increased. Now that he stood close to her, she decided that he was far younger than she had imagined at first. His skin was startlingly white, as effulgent as a woman's. Tony felt somehow, perhaps because of an ambiguous trick he had of glancing askance out of the corners of his eyes, that he must resemble his mother. And yet his face was far from effeminate, virile, brutal looking almost, with a heavy jaw and thick nose. He felt her looking at him and turned to her.

"You're an American," he affirmed.

"Yes, how did you know?"

"I've heard you speak."

Whereupon Tony started in to tell him and Granny Firkin all about herself, as indeed she always did if any one chose to listen to her. How she came from Virginia,

how all her family wished she was dead, and what great things she was going to do.

Hearn listened to her, looking away as though he were watching something at the far side of the stage. He was thinking that Tony's surety of success, her faith in life, was pretty—touching almost; but he was careful not to show his sympathy. Your insular artist is a perverse creature, as disagreeable as the foreign genius is charming. Sensibility, all the qualities of talent, blend sourly with the Anglo-Saxon temperament.

Tony had just branched off on a little confidence about Samuel Pickwick, his beauties both moral and corporeal, when Mr. Webster dismissed the rehearsal and she found herself adrift in the Manchester traffic, very tired, very hungry, for she had had nothing to eat since eight o'clock. It was now six and she had stood all the while. The Websterites hustled past her, mad to use the free hour left them before they must be back in the theater making up for the performance. Pa himself passed her and stopped to speak with her.

"Well, shall you like the business?" he asked. And here, in the surge of the street, Tony poured out her soul to him. When he heard how she had had to contend, before being allowed to go on the stage, he was very angry.

What! the theater to be so maligned,—the theater that taught and consoled! Oh, he wasn't talking of musical comedies or the halls, but the drama, serious work, that kept a woman rehearsing out of harm's way seven hours in the twenty-four, and gave her some fine thinking to do in the interim. The poor theater! Like the church, it was persecuted. It had its martyrs, too,—men who gave it their voices, their health, who died for it, as for their religion. Well, it would come to its own yet. And Pa went away smiling, radiant with tenacious faith.

. . . . .



The scene is a dressing-room; the time, three-quarters of an hour before the curtain rises. The crude light of four electric bulbs falls with a meridional fervor on four bent backs, while four pairs of hands flutter busily, kneading paints, brandishing sticks of makeup, and shaking bottles of liquid white.

“ I’m wait, wait, waiting  
To be given away.  
I’m wait, wait, waiting  
For the happy day.  
I’ve got my trousseau.  
I’ve made every plan.  
I’m wait, wait, waiting;  
All I want is the man,”

sings Louisa Frou-Frou, in a pair of stone-colored stays and black alpaca drawers. The other three ladies, Mon-dragonie, Mrs. Jack, and Jonesey, are clad in undergarments equally severe. Their calico dressing-gowns, buttoning virtuously under their chins, hang in conventual folds, stiff with starch and seeming to bristle with prejudice.

Tony enters. “ Whatever’s this?” asks she, referring to a leather jerkin and a pair of green knickerbockers that are spread on her dressing-table.

“ You’re to go on as a boy, and jolly lucky you are,” cries Louisa Frou-Frou, aggrieved. “ Oh, I wish I was another shape!”

“ Aren’t they rather small?” queries Tony, alluding to the green nether garments.

“ They are a bit, dear,” Mrs. Jack confesses, “ both Ham and Ham, Junior, have outgrown them.”

“ I bet a bob you can’t get into ’em,” from Louisa Frou-Frou.

“ If at first I don’t succeed, I’ll try, try again,” sings out the hopeful Tony.

“ You better manage to get into ’em, for you won’t get

nothink else," snorts Mrs. Jenks. The terrible Wardrobe Mistress is seated on a theatrical basket, a bottle of stout in one hand, a glass in the other. She takes a swig, rears up her head, and stares at Tony offensively.

"Per'aps the young lady would like me to get 'er a new costchum, the velvet trunks per'aps out of 'Enery the heighth."

"Well, if you've got anything a bit more roomy, Mrs. Jenks,——" Tony concedes.

"I don't go into 'Enery the heighth to-night for nobody—no, not for Queen Mary, much less for a swankey American."

"A what American?" asks Tony, dangerously polite and very dignified—at least as dignified as the green nether garments will allow.

"Swankey is w'at I said, and swankey I repeat. You Americans—you think you can act. You're all swank and bounce, and when you come over 'ere we give you the bird."

"We don't always like your English actors, Mrs. Jenks, but we don't give them the bird, because it would hurt their feelings——"

"'Ear, 'ear; listen to 'er. She ought to be in Parliament, she ought." And the old bully stamps out of the room, licking the foam of the stout off the neck of the bottle.

"Half an hour, ladies and gentlemen, if you please," shouts Jimmy, the call boy, coming up the stairs four at a time.

"Half an hour? I shall never be ready," Jonesey gasps.

"Oh, chuck it, Jonesey; you make me tired. Every night it's the same thing," Louisa Frou-Frou complains. "Look at her; she's been here since six. She's made up, she's dressed, she's only got to put her ruff on."

"And how about my necklace and my puffs," wails Jonesey. "I'll run it too close some night, you'll see. Just

think, if I was to come on the stage breathless and all of a flutter."

"Well, what of it? You've got nothing to do."

"Oh, Louisa Frou-Frou, it's I that throw the rose at Pa."

"Well, you don't need your breath for that."

"I need all my faculties," reproves Jonesey, rolling her eyes that look very innocent in spite of their blued lids. "Supposing there was a manager in front—he might recognize my talent by just such a little piece of business as the throwing of that rose."

"Quarter of an hour, ladies and gentlemen, if you please," bellows Jimmy.

"I shall be late," prophesies Jonesey, "something tells me I shall."

"Enough, Jonesey, enough!" cries Mondragonie, trying her stage voice. "You're telling on my nerves, Jonesey. I am an artist, a sensitive woman. I need some time before a show for meditation, to absorb the atmosphere of my part——"

"Am I made up brown enough for a boy—yes or no?" questions Tony. But the four backs are wrestling with their own problems, so she climbs on a chair to inspect the green knickerbockers in the glass. She looks over her shoulder and studies her rear view. "My poor father!" sighs she.

"Ladies and gentlemen, beginners, if you please!" comes Jimmy's clarion call.

"Nervous, Tony?" asks Mondragonie, chewing a lozenge to beautify her voice.

"Feel a bit as though I were going to have a tooth out."

"Temperament. Just put your hand on my heart."

"Gracious!" says Tony, out of politeness, although she feels nothing at all.

"You're smudgy in the face," criticises Mondragonie.

"Yes, am I not?—just like a bit of bacon turning bad. But you look wonderful, a perfect waxwork." Indeed, nothing in nature is so pink as Miss Mondragonie's cheeks, and her face is divided down the middle by a nose as white as a bone.

A half-hour later Miss Ethgrete, disguised, or perhaps exposed would be a juster adjective, as a very plump boy, presented herself to the public, to the hydra-headed monster she now served. For the first time she faced that myriad-handed omnipotence whose palms can make of an actor's life heaven or hell. After her exit, as she stood in the wings, etiquette and the tightness of her nether garments not permitting her to sit, Miss Ethgrete summed up the emotions of her first appearance in words to this effect.

"It's an extraordinary thing," mused she, "that I feel no embarrassment when I'm on the stage in these—well, dressed as I am; but when any one in the wings calls me Miss Ethgrete, bows to me for instance, as Mr. Hearn did just now, I feel so conscious of my legs. This is a small feeling and unworthy of an artist."

## CHAPTER VII

Thus began for Tony her stage apprenticeship, a life as laborious as a tradesman's, as arduous as a man's. At first she was crushed, ground down by the pressure of work, by the short rations of food and sleep. But, take it all in all, stage drudgery is healthy,—healthy in the regularity of its very irregularity. Almost all great actors, with the exception of Rachel, have been long lived, though this may be due merely to the survival of the fittest. Nervous prostration is rarer on the stage than in society, and in the theater the worry is chased away so quickly by the next day's breeding which goes to make disease and age, is impossible. The cat, with no more lives, the curlew with its digestion, are no better off so far as health is concerned than the average actor.

Yet what a strain repertory work is! Called at seven, by half past eight Tony was dressed and was travelling, sometimes on a bus, sometimes on foot, theaterward with Mondragone. At that hour, in every maternal house the family sat breakfasting round the sumnering urn. Tony looked in through the window as she passed and thought of home and waffles.

Rehearsals were called any time from nine to ten and lasted till five o'clock—in strenuous times till six. To keep a big cast put in a repertoire of some twenty plays takes every minute of seven hours a day. The late arrivals were fined half a crown, which was paid over to the Destitute Actors' League. Louise Iron-Face was invariably behind time. She could, however, always give a plausible reason. Her fertility of invention was staggering. On one occa-

sion her nose had retarded her by bleeding persistently, or so she said in a snuffly voice. The exquisite ingenuity of this excuse so delighted Pa that he forgot to fine her.

At twelve-thirty half an hour was allowed for lunch. No artist, however, was permitted to leave the theater. Food in the shape of Bath buns was supplied by Mr. Webster. Saul, the dresser, portioned out these delicacies from a paper bag. At this hour he brought albums, too, to Pa and the leads. Enthusiasts in the town had confided these tokens to him, asking for signatures. "What shall I say, Saul?" Pa once asked of his dresser.

"She wants something from Macbeth, sir. She admires you in the part. A word of encouragement or advice from you, sir."

"Dear me, let me see. Ah! 'Bear ye men children only,' eh, what?"

"Won't do, sir; not flowery enough," the judicial Saul made answer.

Pa was at his best in this half-hour's respite, asked after every ache and pain in his company; knew which beginner had had a good notice and congratulated the young actor; remembered the newest pupil, the humblest walker-on; went about teaching, helping, inspiring, all the while talking and laughing like a boy at recreation. One midday he and Granny Firkin had a discussion on biblical characters, and the subject coming round to Noah's wife, "By the way, Saul," asked Mr. Webster, "who was Noah's wife?"

The dresser hemmed and hawed, and murmured coyly, "Noah 'ad no wife, sir. The female w'at sailed with 'im in the ark was a kep' woman."

The first two or three hours rehearsing, watching the principals being taught their tricks, waving a palm leaf fan, and shouting "Down with Coriolanus," were ecstatic. But about three o'clock came the tug. The pupils had then been standing for over five hours. It was not etiquette for the



humbler members of the company to sit. On the stage, within hearing of the cues, there were only a few chairs, and these were provided for the leads. The beginners shifted from one leg to the other like cab horses. Some had varicose veins; all went through a hard time when their feet swelled and ached. "I wish I was an acrobat and could stand on my hands," Tony confided to the groaning Louisa Frou-Frou. Gradually the weak pupils, the flabby, the uncourageous, broke down, went home, were weeded out. Webster's company was made up of the survival of the fittest; his school was the trial by fire,—the finest training in the world, whether for the stage or for the fight life is.

At five o'clock, just when the world to which Tony once belonged was trolling off to tea in limousines and broughams, the Websterites would come out of the theater, blinking in the light, and trudge off to the nauseous meal a theatrical landlady only is capable of concocting. In stage circles this five-thirty mess of broken meats and vegetable marrow goes by the name of "dinner." A plate heaped with nourishment, a few swigs of stone ginger beer, and Tony and Mondragonie were tending theaterward again, arm in arm. The clerks, putting up the shop shutters, saluted the girls as they passed with a wink at once amorous and jocose. All the world is going off duty just as stage folk, after memorizing and rehearsing all day, set to work in earnest.

"I'll stand you a drink, ladies. Miss Ethgrete and friend—found out your name, see?—what'll you have?"

This offer was invariably made by the officiating bacchus of the theater bar. The Grand Marnier, Benedictine, Curaçoa, flashed around him like evil signals.

"I wonder if I had a swig if I'd play up? Critic night to-night, Tony."

"Not a bit of it, Mondragonie dear. You'd call 'Murder' Mehurder, and 'Blood' Belood. Come away—but

thank you just the same, Mr. Bartender," and taking her friend by a sharp elbow, Tony led her off to the dressing-room. On the way Mondragonie justified herself. "I'm only thinking of my art," she expostulated. "I only want to develop my temperament." And, to do her justice, she was no daughter of the vine. But this very desire to succeed tends in a business where every nerve is strained to breaking to induce a taste for stimulants. The amount of alcohol and drugs that are consumed in the "profession" is fabulous. Many actors make a study of drink, taking brandy for violent parts, Curaçoa for passionate rôles, champagne for farce, etc. Like Kean, some players are unable to act unless under the influence of spirits, morphine, ether even. Besotted they lurch in the wings, but no sooner do they face the footlights than they speak with the tongues of angels.

From the time Jimmy calls the half-hour till he shouts "Curtain up!" from dressing-room to dressing-room, half-clad males and females race through the corridor like ponies, neighing "Ham, Junior, bring me back the Swansdown," "Eglantine, I'll swap the eye black against a stick of carmine No. 3," or "You'll find the cold cream in a pot marked 'Salmon Paste,' but don't talk to me, I've lost my tights." In the hall men in cavalier wigs, and not much else, rehearse scenes with girls who from their dressing-rooms are trying to give the response, lace their corsets, and simultaneously keep the door from opening more than a crack. It's all very "en famille," but not improper at all. The dressing-rooms are like a partitioned nursery waking in the morning, a universal dormitory where the name of love is never breathed and the word sex unknown.

When she was off stage, Miss Ethgrete waited for her cues, sometimes in her dressing-room, where she memorized and prepared recitations for Pa's class, Mrs. Jack at her side darning stockings all among the grease paints. Or

more often, shivering in the wings, Tony studied the play of the principals. In the entre-acts she wrote to such Americans as she loved. As the night wore on every dressing-room had its stage-struck pupil crouched over a letter, thinking of home.

Oh, the ineffable melancholy, the picturesque discomfort of those interminable waits, the cruel cold of the provincial theaters! In the green room Macbeth and his hairy warriors hold their shins to the grate. Their savage wigs stir in the draught, while they whip their blood into action, beating their chests with their brawny, braceletted arms. Cricket, hockey, football, the future of the Webster team, are the themes discussed. And Webster himself holds forth, exposing his theories with the fervor that is his.

"In the past, the trained athlete, the acrobat, stood high in this profession. In the time of Grimaldi, gentlemen, it took some muscle to make an actor. An actor then wasn't a spouter of words only—he had to play the harlequinade—and this brings me to one of my convictions. Unless you're in splendid physical training, gentlemen, thoroughly fit, mind you, every nerve like steel——"

"Your cue's gone, sir. You've missed your cue. You're holding the act up, sir." The eager call boy has thrust head, shoulders, half his body through the door.

"You're short of breath, James."

"I've been up to your dressing-room for you, sir."

"I thank you, James, but you're out of condition, my lad." And Webster strides away to make a belated entrance, shaking a javelin in either hand.

On Pa's exit the highland chiefs gather their kilts about them, swear at the cold, and talk shop. That lucky dog of a so-and-so is doing well in Australia, says one.

"There's the country for me," cries Banquo. "Fine climate, big future——"

"And what salaries," growls the hoary Macduff. And

the warriors fall to dreaming of a Utopia where each will play Hamlet and open his dressing-room door of a Friday pay night to an envelope bursting with gold. For the actor never outgrows the belief that he would be better off somewhere where he isn't. He has the best of hearts when you want a heart. He's the best of friends when you need a friend. Yet for everyday purposes he is all nerves, the player is, fermenting with grievances, always "agin the management."

"I wish I'd gone on the halls," moans Banquo. "I'd be as rich as Harry Lauder now."

"I should play Lewis Waller parts. I'm going to play them—I will play them," declaims young Eglantine, and he licks his forefinger and rubs the powder from his eyebrows like a girl.

Every novelist is something of a psychologist, but the actor—or at least the average actor—does not, cannot perhaps, diagnose to you the traits of the character he interprets.

"I'm playing a Charles Wyndham part, a George Alexander part, a Herbert Tree part," etc., and with the monkey qualities of his art he forms himself, voice, gesture, personality,—he takes the mold, as it were, of some leading artist,—the very individuality, or as much of it as he can get.

The women sit away from the fire out of the conversation, by themselves. Their intellectual inferiority—they have long accepted the fact—denies them the right of entertainment and warmth. Nevertheless, they appear more interesting than in the daylight, the close medieval head-dress invests them with a certain mystery of expression. Several are costumed as pages and move with the degenerate grace of large-hipped boys.

A sort of coma creeps over the actors. They loll about till their cue is called, patient, fatalistic, habituated to the

stupefying waiting that has already used up more than half their lives.

The room grows stuffy, but the persecuting cold perseveres. At intervals spits of rain trickle down the window. The green room gives on a back street where unscrupulous cats scud through the dark with stiffened tails, while from the bar opposite a sluttish old woman topples out wearing a cape under which the sly thing is hiding a nipper of gin more than likely.

“Toad that under a cold stone  
Days and nights hath thirty-one.”

The voice comes from the stage. It's David Hearn, booming away as the second witch.

“Sweltering venom, sleeping got,  
Burn thou first i' the charmed pot.”

Then a prolonged rattle of thunder, Miss Patsy Groggarty's work. She is suspended to a sheet of cast iron and shaking it for all she is worth, like a bulldog that won't let go what it's got a grip on.

The entre-acts passed in the dressing-room prove even more soporific. The gasjets wheeze, giving vent to interminable screams. Outside, by the pit door, an orange vendor shouts. At moments through the flies the actors' voices ring up in sudden bursts of speech, and through the throaty recitative the see-saw of phrases learnt by heart and heard from a distance sounds the rumble of r's, the sibilant hiss of s's. “The old rag's lifting,”—and a surge, like the onrush of a wave, tells that the iron safety curtain is being drawn up.—“It's near your entrance, Louisa Frou-Frou. Look out or you'll miss the bus!”—“It's pay night and I'm not sorry. I'm on my uppers. I'm bust. Has the

ghost walked with my forty bob yet?" Such is the conversation that takes place in the dressing-room night after night, while Tony writes home on an edge of table among the cosmetics, dashes off ream after ream of whole-hearted effusions to the friends who have not quite given her up. Hers are characteristic scrawls, optimistic, breezy, and so primitive is the penmanship and so forcible the phrasing that they might be described as "calls of the wild." These letters, rife with underlined words, dashes, exclamation points, are composed with the head much on one side and the tongue delicately curled out of the left corner of the mouth. In moments of inspiration considerable flouncing about takes place, sucking of the pencil, tossing of the short brown curls, and every scribble breathes vitality, the vigor of a brave young creature living the life she has chosen.

"I wish I'd taken up typing as I had a mind to and never stepped on the British boards," Mrs. Jack sighs, bending her little mouse-colored head over the child's sock she is mending. "It's the children make me nervous. Somehow when I get to thinking what it would mean for them if I lost my job, I get nerves, can't play Puck for nuts." And regretful she goes on darning, all among the grease paints.

It was at night only, when her work was done, that a sense of homesickness came over Tony, an aching nostalgia. After supper, generally cold mutton, pickled beets, and rhubarb tart, she sat with Mondragonie close in to the grate where a sprinkling of fire smoldered. For all the grind of the day and the late hour, the girls indulged in interminable discussions, grew light-headed with gossip. Mondragonie discoursed on that past she assured she kept behind her—as indeed where else could one keep a past?—and Tony in her steamer coat, now converted into a dressing-gown, her little white feet half in and half out of an



old pair of pumps, asked the requisite questions and gave the necessary impetus in the way of exclamations, while looking for all the world, with her curls just brushing her shoulders, like a duodecimo edition of *Trilby*.

The life of Helen of Troy, the carryings-on of Calypso or any such other enchanting sinner would seem pale, washed-out, regular Miss Edgeworth's *Tales for the Young*, compared with the lurid past of Miss Mondragonie. Her talk evoked orgies of a shameless gaiety, and she herself, swooning in the midst, a carnal, fleshy woman of Rubens' imagination. "Goodness, what goings-on!" Tony would politely exclaim, and glancing up, catch sight of Miss Mondragonie's austere shape, as unvoluptuous as a shad's, draped in an alpaca dressing-gown and her brow crowned, not with the prolific vine or the jocund grape as her discourse led one to expect, but a wreath of prosaic curl papers, promissory notes of beauty without which this wise virgin never retired to rest.

Outside, retarded vans grumbled and roisterers went by singing, this being the commoner part of the city. On Saturday nights the lodgers on the floor above, a ventriloquist and his wife who played on the halls, held a ball. Through the porous flooring jovial noises, the thud of feet, the twang of a banjo, filtered down to where Tony and Mondragonie, each in a horse-hair chair, her head against an antimacassar, smoked a final cigarette under the crude light of the chandelier that rocked like a pendulum to the rhythm of the dancers.

All about the two girls the bric-à-brac jingled. The photographs of the landlady and of her tribe fell face downward, while the Japanese fan on the mantelpiece shivered like a guilty thing.

On certain nights Louisa Frou-Frou would blow in from No. 13 Paradise Street—at the last moment she had preferred No. 13 to No. 10 because of the potency of the

figure.—Yes, curiously enough 13 is the very magnet of good luck according to the stage creed. At this hour from Louisa Frou-Frou's wrist a kettle swung like a chatelaine.

"Loan me a drop of hot water, Mondragonie dearie. The pipes in my digs are froze," she would explain.

"And to-morrow's Sunday and you're booked for the day. Going out with Jimmy, eh, isn't that it?" insinuates the love-obsessed Mondragonie, arching her eyebrows in a laborious smirk that causes her scalp to shift and every curl paper to rustle.

"'Ark at 'er, Tony. She's doing her best to chaff me." And Louisa Frou-Frou turns full on Mondragonie a convex face as inexpressive as a globe before the map is drawn upon it.

On other occasions earlier in the evening, when Mondragonie was still slicing the roast, Louisa Frou-Frou would plunge in, heady with gossip about her landlady, a temperamental person who, having thrown all responsibility of supper to the winds, had locked her store cupboard and partaken herself to the nearest pub. Indeed, Louisa Frou-Frou's misadventures with her landladies were proverbial. She had weathered all the discomforts that can attack an actress touring on eighteen shillings a week. She had known the landlady querulous, pugilistic, sluttish, drunken. She had elbowed every sort of degradation that rents a room and bad food at 2 shillings 6 pence a day. Through all this she had passed bovinely calm, with the placid dignity of an idol, a sacred cow. Indeed, Louisa Frou-Frou was a philosopher, as any one may be if he only have a sound digestion and sleep ten hours. Like the majority of actresses, she had taken up the stage as a profession, not as a career. She had no talent—what of that? She must make her living, and surely it is easier to paint one's face every night and shout a few words with carefully aspirated h's than to crouch all day over a typewriter or

stand behind a counter from nine to seven. If she did not talk of Art with a big "A," she nevertheless had a profound respect for the stage, and for all appertaining to it, even to the raising and falling of the curtain. What an admirable organization! The business manager kept in evening dress, the stage hands provided with white cotton gloves for the handling of the scenery, and Louisa Frou-Frou found in board and lodging.

One night Louisa Frou-Frou swooped in from No. 13, breathless with indignation and almost vivacious through hunger. It seemed her landlady had again gone on strike.

"Here's food and to spare," cried Tony, waving her fork over the supper table, and the hospitable Mondragonie fell to dividing the pickled beets into three portions instead of two.

"Well, I could do with a bit of something to eat," Louisa Frou-Frou confessed, shedding her Harris tweed overcoat. And she drew her chair in to the table.

"What do you say to some ginger beer all round?" queried Tony, hankering to give a party. "Stone ginger? Schweppe's? I'll stand treat." And she bolted into the hall, where she was heard planning not only for ginger beer but nuts, oranges, and Everton toffy, all from the sweet shop at the corner, a canny establishment that kept open till past twelve, knowing the actor client, counting on the mummer's impromptu festival nature.

Now to-night. "I always say," says Mondragonie, harpooning a very thin chicken, an anatomical study in fowls, "that while I am for free love—a little piece off the leg, Tony——?"

"I'm not for keeping company at all." Louisa Frou-Frou is eyeing the very small bird with a surgical interest. "Love's so unsettling-like!"

"That's the straight griffin," agrees Tony. The cockney

slang gains a drawling charm when spoken in her soft southern voice.

"Well, I didn't expect to hear that from you," insinuates Mondragonie.

"Why, independence of heart is my war cry," protests Tony rather hotly. "I'm cranky on the subject!"

"Well, you don't live up to it—no, you don't, with Eglantine, our old Egg, always galivanting round you, bringing you chairs at rehearsal as though you were so weak you couldn't stand——"

"And after Jumping Jack's dancing classes, buttoning up her boots," Louisa Frou-Frou chimes in.

"Well, I never! Because I won't put up with the manners of your Englishmen—why, in the South——"

"There she goes again," Louisa Frou-Frou jibes. "Every time I come across her she's looking up into Egg's face as gentle as a kitten and saying 'In the South, Mr. Eglantine, we do this—— In the South, Mr. Eglantine, we do that.'"

"If you ask me," declares Mondragonie, "I think they must go on scandalously in the South—Oh, drat this bird!" And she lost all patience with the chicken and crushed it with her knife, like a beetle.

"Gracious! You are queer, Mondragonie, you and Louisa Frou-Frou, and all English girls, for the matter of that. You don't seem to know the difference between politeness and love-making. I believe if a man was to pull you from under a tram-car, you'd think it was because he liked your face, and you'd start on that as a foundation for a breach-of-promise suit."

"That sounds like that red-headed fellow—what's his name? Hearn. You can see he's been talking with her. The man's got an influence over her——"

"What does a toff like him go on the stage for anyhow?" Louisa Frou-Frou propounded, "taking the money poor

actors need when he draws a salary on his statutory alone of I don't know how many pounds a month."

"Now that's the sort of talk that makes me hopping mad," Tony blurted out, drawing the corks from the ginger beer bottles with a deal of splurge and waste. "If a rich man takes up the law, or medicine, or school-teaching, you speak well of him for working when he doesn't need to; but if he becomes an actor, oh, fie! he's taking an unfair advantage, when the truth is money's a hindrance on the stage, not a help. It's a handicap—that's been dinned into me all right since I came over from America. The word 'amateur' sticks longer when you're not dependent on your salary. I have heard Mr. Hearn himself ask—you know how he does, looking so savage and throwing his arms about—'Why should a man be preferred to me as an actor merely because he happens to be the son of a charwoman? Is the stage a profession or is it a home for the destitute and the incompetent?'"

"Oh, my eye, Mondragonie. If she's going to serve us up Hearn's big talk——"

"He's getting a mastery over you, Tony," warns the male-wise Mondragonie. "Mark my words, my experience has taught me to distrust men whose hair and eyes don't match——"

"Well," giggles Louisa Frou-Frou, grown flippant on the ginger beer, "you couldn't expect him to have red eyes like his hair, could you?"

"No, but I could expect him to have brown hair, like his eyes," Mondragonie reprimands. "I once knew a man—but let that pass."

With Miss Mondragonie, however, Cupid and his works was a refrain that never did pass. Over the chicken bones she told again of her guilty life.

"A fortune teller once promised me I should marry," Louisa Frou-Frou confided in her turn. "He fished about

in some sand and picked out a wedding ring. His name was something like Bedridden Bey. He was black."

"Oh, a sand diviner," commented Mondragonie, unconvinced. "Crystal gazers are more classy." And these two fell to discussing the unfailing theme between English girls, how best to procure a husband. The man-chase had no appeal for Tony. She forgot to listen; absently, with her supple little hands, she worried the girdle of her dressing-gown. Facing her on the fire screen the landlady's portrait dwindled to a mist and in her imagination Tony saw again the brass knocker of her own front door, the piazza where she had learnt to walk, the white columns of home.

"You can't get a word out of Tony unless you talk shop," says Louisa Frou-Frou, and Tony, hearing her name, starts, looks round, and smiles.

So the girls chattered till the night was well on, till the little maid-servant, with one cheek sootier than the other, came in from No. 13 to warn Louisa Frou-Frou that the Missus was locking up.

In the dark on the landing, where a smelly rubber tree rotted in a pot, the girls said good-night. In her room Tony found the gas glimmering no bigger than an iridescent bead. She turned it up and the flame flared, revealing the mildewed wallpaper and the print of Queen Elizabeth refusing to die in bed. Pickwick on the bolster was awakened and flopped about to prove the light disturbed him, then droned off to sleep again. The room was cold and still. No noise penetrated from the street. The trams had long ceased running. The only sound was the intermittent drip-drop of soot as it fell in clots into the empty grate.

When Tony was ready for bed she said her prayers, kneeling as straight as an allegorical angel, and hardly had she laid her head on the pillow and her cheek on the pink palm of her hand when she was off to sleep, just as her long lashes quivered to rest. To see Tony when she slept



it was hard to believe that here lay an actress—that is to say, a fighter in the most cynical and cruel of professions. With her head snuggled in the pillow and her pretty chin tucked into the bedclothes, she looked a child. One felt that innocence and happy hopes must emanate from her like a perfume, just as a rose gives out its fragrance.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE traveling took place of a Sunday. During the still hours of morning service, when prayers were droning in every church, when a Sabbath dullness lulled the town, then the mummers would come filing out of the railway station; the women first, in sporty ulsters and felt hats, as though they were going shooting on the morrow, the men after, looking worn yet degenerately young. A long upper lip is the stigma of each and cheeks cleft with a furrow from nose to chin. The Sunday streets echoed to their voices. They spoke shamelessly loud, accustomed to the theater's abnormal conditions of sound. Strung with unseemly bundles and impromptu parcels, on they came, a motley, warm-hearted crew. Sober citizens turned aside to avoid them, and the dogs barked after them. In their track grumbled a baggage van piled with theatrical hampers all labeled in scarlet, "Gregers Webster's Shakesperian Touring Company," and Mrs. Jenks walked at the wheel with the set jaw of a gladiator.

When entering a town, a company of actors is always as cheery as a host of sparrows. Here are new pastures to conquer, here one may make a hit perhaps, storm the press, who knows; subjugate a manager possibly. Mondragonie, aggressively gay, habitually headed the procession. She would yodle over her shoulder at the men, "Cuckoo," "Peek-a-boo," and other inanities. In traveling Mondragonie always wore her best clothes and newest hair. En voyage she appeared very much the leading lady, with a bunch of artificial orchids pinned to her Harris tweed overcoat. Young Hearn usually marched midway in the

procession, swinging his valise the length of his long arm, and jostling the troupe fore and aft. Then suddenly he would halt before some pretentious building, the town hall, for instance, or the cathedral. The Webster company passed beyond his ken while he glowered at the architecture, tracing in his mind nobler arches, more harmonious pillars. Some way behind the file of actors Granny Firkin followed, leaning on her umbrella, the other hand on the shoulder of some friend, Tony's generally. A deep sympathy had sprung up between these two. Granny Firkin was wise in stage lore. She had faced the footlights night after night for some sixty years, holidays and Sundays excepted. She dated from the days of John Hare, when the English Harlequinade was dying and the Pantomime coming into favor. She had stories to tell of all the great artists from Garrick down to the present; how Ristori had injured her sight by staring unflinchingly through the sleep-walking scene, how Mounet-Sully was gone blind playing *Œdipus King*, how Mrs. Patrick Campbell on her first public appearance had lost her petticoat and made her name simultaneously. Granny Firkin told Tony also of the aristocracy of the English theater, of the Terrys, the Titheridges, the Broughs, the Rooks, the annals of the old stage families. Granny Firkin had much to teach, too: all the tricks of the trade,—how to fasten on the face a glycerine tear, how to enact blindness by keeping the nose on a level with the dress circle, how to hold the audience by change of tempo, how to size up your public and appeal to it.

The young girl listened devoutly, her lips parted, her face as fresh and pink as a peony. Now and then she shifted her heavy satchel from one hand to another, or bore it on her shoulder like an Eastern woman her urn.

Away behind, last but not least, Pickwick came paddling, turning out his toes and pretending he had nothing in common with these ribald playfolk, but was bound to church.

"Samuel knows his Sabbath from his week-days, like any other Christian," Tony was wont to aver.

Later, when the plays were under way, there came a let-up in rehearsing. The students set to work in earnest. From ten to twelve a recitation lesson with Pa. The more Tony was with this man the more she came under the spell of his gentleness, his humility, his humane humor. The pupils were allowed to recite what they chose, as they chose, Pa listening. He then criticised, guided, brought out what was best in his pupils, but never pretended to teach the art that never can be taught. It was noticed that he liked best the comic recitations, laughing at them heartily. And no doubt they were a relief after the never-ending Shakesperian spoutings. His face grew dark whenever a pupil announced the "To be or not to be" speech, Othello's ravings, the Balcony Scene, or any other chestnut. One morning, a youth having just ended Mark Antony's harangue in the Forum, Pa asked him, "Young man, did you ever hear Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree make that speech?" "No, sir." "Whom have you heard?" "You, sir." "Ah, that's just what I was afraid of." And Pa was very glum during the rest of the lesson.

After lunch a dancing class with Mrs. Jack, *première danseuse*. Then gestures and Delsarte, directed by Mon-dragonie—embraces, swoons, pointing at rivals, spying ships at sea, etc., etc. After this Jonesey holds an elocution class. She bids her pupils buzz like bees, so as to make their voices resound on the pallet; she encourages them to repeat such inanities as "Mumsey milking münchens mewed meowed." Poor Jonesey, she mouthed and mewed, while her pupils were extremely pert to her.

When any spare time came round the School Plays were rehearsed. These were produced by the principal actors of the company and acted by the students as a form of examination. Tony found herself cast for the Nurse in

Romeo and Juliet. It was rather a blow. "I'm going to ask Pa to give me Romeo," cried the enterprising Jimmy, the call boy. And off he went as light as Mercury. He came back as light as Mercury. "What luck, Jimmy?" Tony hailed him. "Oh, fine, I'm to play in the Hamlet production." "What, Hamlet?" "No, the second grave digger." There were vitality, pluck, and vigorous young spirits to spare in Mr. Webster's school.

Every Friday was Fainting Morning—that is to say, the day for rehearsing stage fits, faints, falls, and deaths by weapons or poison. One week, "Give us an epilepsy," commanded the Sergeant, signaling out Jonesey.

"Might I do it without the soap, sir?" The true artist keeps a crumb of soap in his cheek during an epileptic fit, so as to foam at the mouth. Pa had set the Spartan example in the part of King John.

"I feel a bit squeamish this morning," ventures the elocutionist.

"Well, well; take a bayonet in the chest instead." And the conscientious Jonesey falls face downward on the floor, where she expires with laborious squirms.

"Passable," snaps the Sergeant, lugging her up by the wrist. "But you've got to practise that death rattle. Cleopatra and the asp next, please." This is a hideous death invented by the Sergeant and of which Louisa Frou-Frou has made quite a specialty. She advanced into the middle of the room in her gymnasium bloomers and instantly fell into convulsions. Her contortions were observed with considerable interest by the new members of the school. The Sergeant, watch in hand, timed her.

"Steady—you're close to the finish. Roll up your eyes. Keep them up. I can't see the whites of your eyes. Right oh—not half bad. Up with you. Will all you ladies and gents oblige me by falling down flat? I want to see which makes the best corpse. Here, here," to a timorous beginner.

"None of this going down in sections. A straight header backwards, all in one piece."

Flop, thud, on to the uncarpeted floor. And there was no one left standing in the room but the Sergeant.

"Your feet went up, Mr. What's-your-name. Here, here, what's all this puffin' and pantin'? A pretty corpse you are with your chest goin' up and down like a bellows." This last reproof was addressed to Tony, who had just been practising Cleopatra's demise in the corner with vim.

"One, two, three!" And the corpses leapt up. "Attention! Will a lady or gentleman oblige me by falling off the table?"

Several volunteers came forward, among the first of whom it seems almost unnecessary to say was Tony. To fall off a table is not as difficult as it sounds, that is to say, if you land on the table first and then slip onto the ground.

"Very neat for a first try," encouraged the Sergeant, when he picked Tony up against the wall, whither she had rolled.

"I should like now to fall off the piano," said Tony, pointing to a battered instrument long since mute. The company were rehearsing in a lumber room over the Bull and Bells, a public house in Newcastle.

"Well," speculated the Sergeant, "it might be done if you broke your fall on the keyboard."

"It shall be done," cried the spirited Miss Ethgrete. And in spite of the Sergeant's shouts of "Steady! Wait a bit!" she scrambled onto the top of the piano, where she stood straight as an exclamation point in her gymnasium knickerbockers and blue jersey. "Hurrah for America!" cried she, then toppled off and came bouncing to earth like a bolster. "All right," she called from somewhere near the pedals, and crawled out on her hands and knees, beaming.

The Sergeant was awed. "Ladies and gentlemen, some one'll have to come down off that piano for England." No



one stirred. "What, got no more spunk than that? Well, then, I'll have to do it myself, for old Ireland—For Erin!" cried he from the top of the piano, and came thundering down over the keyboard like the day of judgment.

"Here, you, the American," said the Sergeant, rubbing his stiff old knees. "The Guv'nor's got to see this. You be practising while I fetch him."

Three times Tony fell off the piano for Mr. Webster's benefit. He only said "If people knew how to relax completely they could fall from any height—well, from a considerable height at least."

But that evening as she was leaving the theater he stopped Tony.

"Are you the girl who tumbles off the piano?"

"I am."

"Would you like to play Mopsa in *The Winter's Tale*?"

"I should."

"Then you shall. It's a good part. It gives you some chance. You jump over the milking stools, you know."

And that is how Tony earned her first rôle, and very well she got through it, and Pa shook her by the hand. Then she gasped to run back to the footlights. She panted to play her part over again, just to show how much better she was capable of doing. But take it all in all, her début was a blood-curdling experience. As she came off stage, Tony confessed to herself that if she had known before she had taken up the cudgels what an actress has to suffer, never, never would she have been brave enough to step into the theatrical arena.

It is not the memorizing, the interminable rehearsals, the hours spent studying an intonation that will not come, that the *pro* dreads, but the terrible stage nerves that return every night as regularly as an attack of malaria. Just as Nelson never went to sea without being seasick, so every actor on a first night—every actor worth his salt—endures

a creeping, gnawing fright. At first a sense of cold grips him, a numbing, demoralizing, hopeless cold. Next he feels a contraction in the throat, a spasmodic need to swallow; then, in the pit of the stomach the whirling as it were of a wheel; the heart itself slipped out of place, one might think, and fluttering in the entrails. "What am I here for?" thinks the panic-struck actor. "What do I say next? Oh, help me somebody!" Vacuity of mind has seized him. The prompter's voice means nothing to him. He feels his brain fill up with cold water. He has forgotten his very identity save as a thing in agony, stared at by thousands of eyes. He sweats cold like a man in the wrenches of seasickness. He trembles; he pants, held by the glare of the footlights, as by a snare. Stage fright! That's what's the matter with him—a treacherous malady and incurable.

Gradually Tony now worked her way up in the company. She played Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*, the Player Queen in *Hamlet*, Phoebe in *As You Like It*. She earned for herself—Oh, halcyon days of promotion—a definite position in the cast. And yet she wasn't as happy as she might have been. The Websterites' attitude towards her, their growing aloofness, hurt her. The company—Mondragonie and some few others excepted—had turned from her and now treated her coldly, not to say with animosity.

Here was Tony, as warm-hearted a mortal as ever petted a stray cat, and yet, by the irony of circumstance, her life through she had only found a few people on whom she could depend—Felton, who wrote to her regularly, Pa Webster, and Granny Firkin were staunch. The companion of her Conservatoire days, Miquette, had not forgotten her, nor had Sister Mary Magdalene—she knew it from their letters. Mondragonie, too, had always seemed her friend, and so had Samuel Pickwick—indeed, she was sure of him.

The stage folk didn't wish her harm, no doubt. Indeed,

they liked her at heart. They couldn't help it. She was so ingenuous, so whole-hearted. But they reproached her with having more money than they had; they resented this fact. In their eyes she was guilty of a heinous crime, the crime of working when she didn't have to, of drawing a salary which she didn't actually need. Actors are very touchy on this point. A millionaire may take up the law, medicine, any profession but the theater. No co-worker will criticise his ambitions; but let a man of independent means go on the stage and his brother artists make a hubbub over his income and deride him as a monster of meanness and vanity.

Yet heaven knows Tony was generous to a fault. She was often hard put to pay her own board, but the mere fact that she could lend and give away as she did made her enemies. Out of her money she spent not a third on herself, so ingenious was she in discovering the poor and the comfortless. She gave and forgot she had given. She lent and never remembered how much. Yet the Websterites could not forgive her her ready funds. They reproached her with being an American. They mimicked her accent. And the more they owed her, the more they maligned her and jibed at her country and her mannerisms.

In this stage world Tony had witnessed heroic friendships. Destitute actors helping actors a bit more destitute. A struggling community, these people of the boards, a family who never fail each other. Tony had come into the theatrical tribe all eagerness. The *pros* had called her "Dear." And yet, somehow, indefinably they had made her feel she was not of the stage dynasty; she was none of theirs. They had left her out in the cold. Why? It puzzled her.

"I don't know how it is," she once confided to David Hearn, "when I'm about the theater, I always feel I'm a visitor."

"Pshaw!" he had answered brutally. "Your trouble is

my trouble. It's the trouble of all *déclassés*. I hate French expressions, but——"

"So do I, unless one's talking of improprieties, and then they come in handy——"

"But *déclassés* we are, you and I. We're neither fish, fowl, nor good red herring. The Bohemian world won't have us and I'll tell you why. We're not dependent on our work for our livelihood, that's why. Oh, you needn't think because you've been through the ups and downs of art that you're a Bohemian. No, for that you must know the grind, the pinch of poverty. So now where do you stand, or where do I, for that matter? For you, by going on the stage, and I by taking to work, we've lost the hall-marks we were born with."

"Well, in America work's no disgrace, and if I succeed I make so bold as to say that every one will be proud of me at home."

"I don't say no, but to be proud of you isn't to be in your social status. Here's a situation similar to yours. Suppose, instead of having been on the stage, you'd been in prison——"

"In prison!" cried Tony, clasping her plump little hands. "Oh, what for?"

"Oh, on a false charge, we'll assume. When you were liberated, you'd receive—just as a favorite actress does—an ovation. Innocence righted. Hurrahing crowds! 'Come to tea,' society would write. And if you, popular actress or acquitted criminal, went, you would find——"

"All my old friends."

"Yes, a crowd of curious skeptics who wouldn't believe in you because they'd watched you grow up or been to school with you. Why you'd only have to face what you ingenuously call your friends, to see them spying on you to catch a glimpse of your prison marks, to know that you were no longer in this people's world—that you weren't

any more one of them." And he left her abruptly, as though she annoyed him. His dislike of her seemed to stiffen his averted shoulders.

Tony would have liked to make friends with Hearn, but he kept aloof, looked at her askance, spoke to her grudgingly, and seemed to resent every breath of English air she drew into her sturdy chest. Once in her hearing he disparaged America. With patriotism she stuttered, she spluttered, while his little eyes twinkled malignantly. Often she wondered what she had done to him. Why did he hate her? Yes, certainly he appeared her enemy, and for a characteristic reason. He bullyragged her simply because he rather liked her. For Hearn belonged to that perverse order of beings who seem bent on thwarting their own interests. They meet an influential man and cross the street. They love a woman, so they're rude to her.

Often Tony caught sight of Hearn watching her from a distance with an enigmatic and disturbing glance. The look in his eyes that arrested her may be diagnosed as the expression of an ever-watchful intelligence,—a mind so alive as to be strained to an abnormal tension; so concentrated a power of thought as to amount almost to a disease of the flesh.

David Hearn was the third son of Lord Finister. This nobleman, by means of a good deal of parliamentary humbugging, had managed to play quite a part in the affairs of State. He now resembled a fox grown fat in misdeeds, still genially sly. A patron of Art was Lord Finister, who had become so familiar with celebrities as to feel rather a contempt for his artistic son and his son's ambitious cravings.

In his boyhood, whatever flashes of talent David may have shown, he was no very attractive child. He was one of those beings that are born with a secret preoccupation—a sort of grudge against the world that they themselves cannot put into words. With the growth of his individu-

ality his talk was of the future, of the fame he knew he should acquire. "I shall be a sculptor," were the words he said most often. Yet he did nothing towards realizing his ambition but brood and glower at life with small, intelligent eyes. Having come through Eton indifferently well and still keeping a persistent thirst for art, his father determined to send him, in the care of a tutor, on a visit to Italy, that well of inspiration. This journey was to be heaven to David, nor was it less beautiful than he had hoped, only, instead of being elated, he was oppressed, suffocated, by Italy's very splendor. Her Art unfurled itself before him, her Madonnas melting in tenderness, her vibrant colors, her blues, sharp as a cry. In her picture galleries, here it was that he felt the first symptoms of the mental malady which was never again to leave him. At this age he was an ugly youth, uncouth, sullen mannered; no one guessed the suffering in his brain, the fermenting ambition and melancholy dreams. At Venice his lodgings gave on the Grand Canal. He would stand on the parapet, looking along the sluggish water, sometimes for hours, troubled already by what one might describe as that nostalgia of fame to which the artistic temperament is prone—that jealousy of whatever surpasses its own powers. Yes, this somber boy was devoured with envy. He coveted the genius of the Old Masters. Murillo, Raphael, Michael Angelo—their names made him ache with a posthumous jealousy. Often and often, as he passed through a picture gallery, he would stop before some canvas that disturbed his spirit, and while his esthetic sense reveled in composition, in color, the bitterest of melancholy crept over him. Never, never should he rival such a masterpiece.

His years at Oxford did nothing to conventionalize him. Something seemed out of kilter in his makeup. One moment he was morose, the next savagely pleasant, intolerable but for his caustic humor; moody, like a certain type of drunk-



ard. Yet he led a most abstemious life—temptation had no hold on him. He seemed born satiated, with no wish to make the world over to his own liking.

The curse of such natures is the bird's-eye view they take of life. They see it not in bits, in portions, but as a panorama,—some eighty years at the outside to be passed somewhere, to be filled in somehow. To most men the hour that is striking dominates. Not so with these eagle-eyed misanthropes. They seem to have an insight into the just proportions of time. To them the present is no more vivid than the past or the future; their to-morrow in the coffin is as clear to their sight as the day of their first cigar, we'll say, or as the moment that passes now to the ticking of their watch. To a man of this temperament, life cannot offer much. The world of art holds up the mirror to his own insufficiency; love is no illusionist to him; he can see his mistress some fifty years hence, decrepit or a mass of corruption.

After Oxford, the Quartier Latin was David's field. Here he worked at anatomy, at sculpture,—long arrears of laziness made up in a hectic hurry. "He's an original," the students said; and at the café they sat down at his table, leaving just in time for David to pay the bill. When Hearn noticed the glasses piled about him like crystal minarets, he smiled as bitterly as though his own mother had tried to rob him. At first he was not over-successful in his art—something lurid and extreme seemed to characterize his work. He kept at it with a dogged perseverance, however, and went about announcing how clever he really was. Then, one fine Easter morning, a statuette of his, a thing he had put no soul in, received the gold medal at the Paris exhibition. For all his boasting, no one was more amazed than he. In this moment of triumph he became as humble as he had been bombastic before in the days of his failure, and he groaned an artistic "mea culpa."

From then he went on from one achievement to another, till he assured himself a definite place among the English sculptors of his time. His ambition still outgrew his success. This mania for fame was a contradictory note in a nature so imbued with contempt for life. At times the discrepancy between the work of his hands and what he saw in his brain caused him to throw his tools aside. At such moments he took up painting, for pecuniary reasons; and he once wrote a play to be produced by amateurs. It proved a success, and wishing to get an insight into the drama, he joined Webster's company, beginning as a super. Perhaps because sculpture was first in his heart, his obsession, his dear dread, he did passably well as an actor. The histrionic is the most ungrateful of arts, always accommodating to those who secretly despise her.

## CHAPTER IX

IN the old days life had presented itself to Tony under smooth contours, no angles, no sharp corners, no terrifying vistas, just a cotton-padded thoroughfare. The world, she unconsciously felt, had waited for her birth. And now she found many a neighbor's hand against her. The men were as uncharitable to her as the women, for, in this singular profession, the actors are as jealous of the actresses as the actresses are of each other. Sex is no safeguard against envy on the stage. For instance, Tony was playing Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*. As she made her exit, Hearn, who spoke the next line, clipped in on her words.

"The red-headed pig," blurted out Louisa Frou-Frou in the wings. "He's cut you out of your round."

"What's a round?" asked Tony, the unsophisticated.

"Why, the clap the audience gives you as you come off, silly."

"Oh? And Mr. Hearn cut met out of it, did he?"

"Course he did. Spoke his lines without waiting, so your round couldn't start."

"Oh, well; he didn't do it on purpose, I'm sure."

"Not on purpose—he? Oh, you don't know 'im. The man's capable of anything, and he hates you."

"Fudge!"

"Fudge yourself. I've seen him look at you with his chin out and his nose flattened down—Lord, I'll miss the bus." (Theatrical parlance for "my entrance.") And grasping a tray of paper flowers, Louisa Frou-Frou, her short skirt slapping against her massive legs, bounced through the wings.

"Perhaps he does hate me," thought Tony, remembering Hearn's studious rudeness. He does hate me, I'm sure. And the conviction was rather stimulating to her. She had once experienced much the same sensation when a dog had snarled at her, as she thought, unjustly. She had felt surprised, a little hurt, exultantly brave, and had then and there patted the beast.

The next morning, as she was coming out of the Wardrobe, her Jessica wig newly plaited in her arms, she faced Hearn, who was striding up the stairs. He stood aside to let her pass.

"No, come up," said she. "I don't want to meet you on the stairs. It's bad luck."

Hearn halted, aggressive. "You're a strict observer of stage superstitions!"

"Well, I try to keep posted in them, just as a compliment to my profession."

He did not move, and she waited, looking past him down the well of the stairs. These were the first words they had exchanged for some weeks, and both felt unaccountably disturbed. For antagonism,—whether it be enacted or real,—like love, has its moments of tension, of almost physical emotion. A pause between two people who dislike each other is as full of meaning, as vital, as the silence of lovers. Suddenly Tony leant over the banister, and with a shy abruptness whispered, "Why do you cut me out of my round?"

Hearn seemed taken aback. For all his broad forehead and rugged jaw, he looked almost sheepish. "Because I give way to my impulses and they're not always good," he answered.

"I almost like you for speaking out so frankly."

"Then you didn't like me before?"

"Well, I wasn't exactly crazy about you," Tony confessed, "nor you about me, I reckon."

"No, you—exasperate me; or at least you did."

With innocent surprise she beamed, "I wonder why."

"Well, for one thing you get on too quickly."

"Do you know, if you were a woman, I should think you were jealous of me."

"As a matter of fact, I am," he answered, coming up the stairs on a level with her. "It doesn't sound well, but all we so-called artists don't like to watch an easy success in any art. We've most of us suffered through our work, and to see a beginner slip without a pang into a good thing riles us."

"But you couldn't play Jessica. I didn't even know you had taken up the stage for good."

"I haven't. I'm not an actor. But I've some of the actor's mean instincts."

"I'm sure no American actor would carry on so—at least, no man from the South would. And now that I look at you close, Mr. Hearn, I'm more and more surprised at your behaving so smally."

"The adjective is just."

Tony was appeased. "I'm not a bit angry with you," said she. And she added, with an indulgent, not to say caressing smile, "The other day I heard you speak well of my dog, Samuel Pickwick."

"We will call a truce, shall we?" And he darted a look at her with his small, inscrutable eyes.

Tony held out her hand to Hearn and he took the solid, supple little paw in his.

There is a peculiar sweetness in these friendships that spring up where scoffing and ill-feeling was before. Tony could literally feel her heart expand, she was braced, vivified. She had crushed something petty in this gripping of hands. Abruptly she went bounding down the stairs, but at the turning she paused and looked over her shoulder, as though to assure. "I haven't forgotten we are friends

now." Her expression was indescribably pretty and ingratiating.

"She looks like a baby St. John the Baptist—a plump one," thought David. And indeed Tony, in her fur coat, with her hair tumbled all about her oval face, and her wide, limpid eyes gazing upwards, was the very image of the little saint just as the Italian masters loved to paint him, looking skyward in his fur tunic.

One morning at Delsarte, "Jonesey has a part," announced Louisa Frou-Frou, "The Bloody Child."—One of the apparitions that appear in the Macbeth witch scene is called "The Bloody Child." It had been till now Miss Patsy Groggarty's rôle.—"Jonesey's in a stew; says she'll never learn it for to-night; and mind you, she has only two hours free to work at it, and she says it's taken her half an hour only to count the words."

"Is Patsy ill?" asked Tony.

"No. But the thunder went wrong last time she played The Bloody Child, and she's going to give up her part."

That night the School collected in the wings to watch Jonesey make her maiden effort. The poor thing, all of a-twitter and laboriously disguised as The Bloody Child, clambered stealthily up a ladder in her felt slippers and white cotton stockings, to appear with horrid suddenness behind the caldron. "Macbeth, Macbeth, Macbeth," bleated she, "be bloody, bold, and resolute——" "She's drying up," whispered Louisa Frou-Frou hopefully. "Be bloody, bold——" falters poor Jonesey, on the top note of the scale. Patsy Groggarty hangs out of the prompt corner. "And resolute," encourages she. "Laugh to scorn the powers of man." But alas, there are certain humble natures that shrivel in the glare of the limelight. Jonesey was one of these. With a feeble flop she vanished behind the caldron. As she came paddling down the ladder, her discomforted



white cotton legs were watched by her malicious pupils. Here was the outcome of five years of assiduous voice culture, five years of "humming" and "buzzing"; five years of telling others how to act. Oh, the misery of being tried and found wanting. Jonesey must have longed for Wales that night; for her father, the old clergyman, and the calm hills of Llewelyn.

It would almost seem as though every other English girl goes on the stage, and as the stage is a career, if not for the elect, at least for the peculiarly constituted, a profession that calls not only for exceptional talent, but powers of pluck and perseverance, you find a lot of useless human driftwood floating with the theatrical tide. These girls drift about for some three to nine years, expending considerable sums on elocution lessons and stage properties, and finally return chastened to their homes, once more to count the week's wash.

It takes some desperate, swashbuckler qualities to make an actress, those buccaneers of the stage. There is no star who isn't something of a bluffer. You are made if you can convey the impression that no one can do you an injustice without your being able to repay the wrong by an even greater ill. If you want to succeed, you must pretend you are a success already. If you want to get to the top, you must look down on others as from a height. "We teach," says Oscar Wilde, "to hide our ignorance." Well, on the stage we prate of technique and speak familiarly of an unfathomable art.

Poor Jonesey could only teach in the schoolroom. Her little trill of voice was never meant for the multitude. After her fatal début, as in tears and melting paint she dropped before the dressing-table, Jonesey was sought out by Patsy Grogarty. The Prompter had laid aside her prompt book for the night and now cried "Jonesey, come; buck up."

Kind Miss Patsy Groggarty! Poor girl! Her history is that of so many of the stage-struck that it's worth the telling. When Patsy had reached the age of indiscretion when a young woman yearns to elope romantically, or take the veil, or turn actress, this bouncing coleen came away from Ireland to England and presented herself before Mr. Webster. She longed to join his school. Pa, always tender to the enthusiastic, gave her her tuition for nothing. She, for her part, did his "Off Stage Effects" for him. She was the lightning, with a fuse; the thunder, with the aid of a tin sheet and a drum; the rain, by the help of glass balls jingled in a box. Give her a hollow tube and she was a shuddering storm, the wind that howls during the murder; while, with a glass of water and a whistle, she impersonated all the birds of summer. She came through the school well and was given small parts. She was never so happy. The Prompter falling ill, she took his place—temporarily it was understood—but the Prompter dying, she stayed on in the prompt corner. The Webster company was her cause, her faith. With the fanaticism of the Irish she worked for it. She was a stage patriot. She worshiped Pa. She thought he was second to no man, St. Patrick included. She it was who led the shouts off stage, who all but burst her thorax shouting "Ave Cæsar." The students were more chary of their lungs, hoping to achieve voices à la Bernhardt. Miss Groggarty rebuked them fiercely. "You couldn't split your throat in a better cause," she would aver. She it was who helped the Sergeant drill the supers. He swore at them less when she was there. "Sure, me boy, they are loonies," she would say soothingly. "And if they had the qualities you're askin' of 'em, it's not supers they'd be at all, but ambassadors." She wasn't the actress she had hoped to be, but the drudge of the company and its guardian angel. The nostalgic students, the stage-struck girls who were beginning to regret home,

found a friend in her. She was as wholesome, bracing, vivifying as a salt sea breaker.

The percentage of actors who fail would prove a salutary study to the stage-struck. For the one star that comes to completion, for the one recognized talent, a hundred possible geniuses slave, starve, and fade away ignobly and unknown.

## CHAPTER X

IT was a Saturday *matinée*, Macbeth was feasting, nor could Banquo's ghost nor cardboard viands choke him off the banquet. "I drink to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss," quoth Pa. And the School pledged him deep, raising empty tankards, quaffing imaginary wine with the realistic clucking of the throat.

Tony, a bonny, barbaric page, her hair tumbling over her shoulders, strode about the stage barefooted. She wore a tabard made of blankets and long, savage, nautical-looking drawers, strapped close to the leg with braid. In her right hand she held high an urn. She bore it as though it effervesced with the nectar of the gods, though inside it was nothing but dust. "A fine gallery," she murmured to a guest who held out his goblet. "Pa's put his crown back to front," whispered a wag further down the table. "Acting up to-night," Tony observed, returning the goblet with a bow. "I wonder if any one's in front? A critic perhaps—a manager maybe." And she shouldered her urn with more style than ever—a medieval butler.

"May good digestion wait on appetite,——" intoned that agitated hostess, Lady Macbeth. And the pages bowed themselves off stage. Now as all pages who respect themselves invariably back into the wings, the exit of a retinue of menials generally degenerates, what with the braces and the lime stands, into a skirmish behind the scenes. This time Tony collided with a property basket and sat down on it. There was some one else on the property basket, some one in a shaggy kilt with a sword laid over his knees, and two black braids of false hair dangling from under a helmet.

"Who are you?" asked Tony, peeking up in the gloom.

"The second murderer."

"Oh, you're Mr. Hearn."

"I am. I've been promoted," he told her. "I used to be a witch."

"How very nice."

And they sat on in the dark, side by side, drumming with their heels and listening to Pa apostrophizing the ghost. Close to them on the ground, like a huddled shape, lay a white robe, a pair of iron greaves, and a shield,—all Eglantine's clothes for his "quick change." Against the wall rested some spears and torches. The latter, though extinguished, still gave out their crude odor of resin. Now and then a wild hill man sneaked by to his dressing-room, hooded, unrecognizable, his false rank hair streaming as far down as his knees, blowing out behind him under his cloak like dead tendrils. Banquo's ghost also passes and repasses, walking delicately. From afar, luminously pale he seems, with cavernous eyes; but near at hand—see, on the throat—oh, horror! a gobbet of blood—a gash where life has slipped out! The apparitions, too, for the next scenes, the witches and spirits of the caldron, shift to and fro among the dark recesses of the stored scenery; mutilated phantoms, ghosts, morbers, while all the time the Scotch music brays, the thunder portends, the actors cry out, and the scene is wild and sad and incongruous, like a dream breaking up at the dawn.

Suddenly Hearn bent over Tony, so as to whisper at the softest. "I always think," he said, "that each of our plays has its characteristic odor. Resin torches for Macbeth—a savage smell, isn't it? Camphor impregnates the Elizabethan costumes—all those stuffy brocaded materials of the period reek with it. In Julius Cæsar humanity carries the day—yes, our extra supers give Julius Cæsar an atmosphere."

For a moment she was taken aback. To her he had always shown himself so aloof, inaccessible, not to say surly, while now—or so it seemed to her in the shifting light—he was looking at her caressingly almost, as though he had always liked her. And quite suddenly, simultaneously, they both edged close together and started in to talk like two friends who have been kept apart a long time.

“Sh-sh-sh! Sh-sh-sh!” hissed Patsy Groggarty to David, who was just whispering to Tony. “. . . No, it wasn’t a prejudice. It was—how shall I explain it? A kind of distrustful interest——”

“Why distrustful?”

“Because——”

“Stow it, Hearn. Stow it, Ethgrete.” And Patsy Groggarty signaled silence with a drumstick. The moment after she brought the drumstick down on a kettle and the audience knew the portcullis had fallen.

“Because,” David breathed, “a feminine being like yourself, who apparently never flirts, who hasn’t one set of manners for men and another for women, is a disturbing conundrum to me.”

Tony swung her bare feet to and fro and offered no explanation.

“I said to myself: Here is a simple and ingenuous looking girl. There are no wiles about her. She doesn’t use a weapon of her sex; yet she gets what she wants: parts, lovers if she set out for them. How does she do it?”

“Why, getting what you want is simple enough, Mr. Hearn. You’ve only got to want it enough, and go straight for it, and grab it.”

“Well,” Hearn admitted, “wrongly or rightly, I now incline to the belief that I’ve misjudged you, and that you’re a walking example of that maxim ‘Honesty is the best policy.’”

Under her tousled hair, her eyes gleamed at him till her



teeth outflashed them. Tony was laughing. For to find David so human, so get-at-able, she experienced a pleasure disproportionate to its cause. After a moment, "Here comes Egg," she said. "I must clear out. He's got his quick change." And she made Hearn a bow, like a well-mannered child, and padded away, barefooted as Eve.

What a singular man this David Hearn. That night Tony thought of him a good deal. She was disturbed by his change of manner. Till then she had imagined he disliked her, that she repelled him somehow. But no, all this time he must have been thinking of her, studying her, for to-night he had asked her why she had done this or that—some trivial action of hers. He had reported her comings and goings as though he had been her shadow. He had even named the dresses she had worn on certain occasions. And each time he referred to an incident that proved his knowledge of her, he looked her in the eyes, smiling almost maliciously. She had been astonished—touched also, in a way—that any one should so keep watch on her. She had felt a little troubled, too, as though some influence all unknown to her had crept into her life and pervaded it.

After this they were friends. And she told him all about herself, or at least all she hadn't told him already. She confided to him—as indeed she did to every one who chose to listen to her—that she had sworn never to marry. He was the first to approve her resolution. Her principle was right, he declared. Celibacy was essential to the development of the artist. Domesticity and inspiration never go together. As for him he protested he would no sooner marry than he would with his own hand draw the coffin lid down on himself. But as for her, he assured, she could never keep her vow; she was a weak, human thing, predestined to matrimony.

"And you're just the kind of a woman," said David,

"to give as a reason for marrying that you're in love, as though that were an excuse."

"Why, what other excuse could I possibly give?" asked Tony, agog.

"How primeval she is," moans David. "My poor child. The wild woman in a fur apron could tell you that mercenary matches take place in a tribe. Some warriors have corals and beads—that's why they're sought after, see? Just as some managers have theaters, some critics newspapers—understand? No, she doesn't. She will marry for love, the very worst foundation for marriage. Hers will be a give-all and get-nothing sort of affection. She will be a bad case."

But Tony declared she didn't believe a word of all this and wasn't going to worry about such foolishness. Indeed, she never troubled over the future. When she was a child and her step-mother used to ask her "What happens to bad little girls?" Tony would answer cheerfully, "They roast for years and years and years." And just as now the prospect of discomfort seemed so far off that she really didn't care.

Often at night after the performance Tony and David met, by chance as it were, at the stage door. The gas flame showed like an amber bead.

"Why, is that you, Mr. Hearn?"

"What, you didn't go home with Mondragonie?" And they gravely played at surprise.

Through the floor, as from the bowels of a well, sounded the tramp of clumsy boots and bellows of "Ave Cæsar" or "Laertes shall be King." The supers were rehearsing, and above their clamor, like a clarion, rang out Miss Patsy Groggarty's strenuous shout.

"I'm going your way. We might as well start off together."

Casually Tony would acquiesce: "Yes, I suppose so,"

and they would pass into the damp night, into that sort of poignant clamminess which in the provincial English towns seems to take you by the throat. Their talk would be of their work, their ambitions, and themselves. There is no denying it, artists are egotistical, be they as warm-hearted, as generous as you please. Observe the actor, the writer, what you will. When he is not employing the words "I" or "my art," his attention wanders and his vitality ebbs.

Perhaps in the warmth of a discussion Tony would take David's arm. They would walk close together, their voices sinking to earnest whispers, his face bent down to hers. If a belated playgoer recognized them, he probably thought them lovers. The sight of an actor and an actress together fires the imagination of the public with erotic fancies. The idea of the stage and illicit love seem interwoven. In truth, Eros has limited sway in the theater. To overhear the average conversation between the star and the leading man, you would think them of the same sex. Faulty acoustics, the number of curtain calls, such are the themes usually discussed between the men and women of this maligned profession.

There is a little sweet shop in Liverpool, between the theater and the "White Swan," that keeps alight till late. Sometimes David and Tony would stop in for a cup of cocoa and a bun.

"At this hour my poor father thinks I'm drinking champagne and kicking top hats over the wings. Isn't life queer?" And Tony philosophized, while bounteously sugaring her cocoa.

One night across the marble-topped table under the screaming gasjet, "There are two kinds of artists," David informed Tony, "the first class and the second class. The second class, that's the bigger, forges ahead through conceit, pure and simple—what you call 'cheek.'"

"That's me," says Tony, ungrammatical and cheerful,

biting a huge piece out of a bun which she held in both hands unashamed.

"I'm discussing generalities," explained David sententiously. "The second-class artist is a lucky man. If he's a sculptor, we'll say, he regrets he wasn't there to give Michael Angelo points; he wastes no energy on worry and he often goes high. Now the first-class artist—he's an artist, indeed; but, oh, what a dreary creature. He's not pleasant to live with. He's jealous of every masterpiece, his own early ones included. He's afraid, deadly afraid all the time. He gets up at night to see if the work he is doing is as good as the work he has done. He suffers; he swears probably, and gives himself dyspepsia and every one else."

"That's you," said Tony, taking another bite even larger than the first.

David flounced back in his chair, as though to say "I give it up," and he strode with her to her door in a black humor.

"I've put you in a grouch," Tony said, as they stood on the steps of her lodgings. "I'm sorry. . . . Mr. Hearn, forgive me if I say something to you that I have on my heart. I knew when you were telling me how some men suffer over their work. I was certain it was of yourself you were thinking. You don't give life a chance. Don't take for granted that she means to harm you till she proves it. I call life 'she,' you see, because she is a bit uncertain."

"You always seem happy. How do you manage it?"

"I trust life. It's the way to get the best out of every one and everything."

David shivered and turned up his coat collar. A penetrating wind had risen, bits of straw and pieces of newspaper were turning somersaults in the streets, while through the cold sky the night clouds scudded guiltily.

"You are an optimist," said he, with the easy contempt

that a morose nature entertains for a more vigorous temperament. "To you everything is for the best in the best of worlds, and you'd advise me to go about smirking, and when I see failure, heart-break, disease, just to shut my eyes and confidently believe that I'm immune and only the nicest things are coming to me."

"I reckon you can do a precious lot towards attracting only the nicest things—good luck, and success—just by keeping cheerful. There's a powerful—what is the word?—magnetism about cheerfulness, while every time you worry and fuss, and compare yourself with others and feel jealous and envious, you lose some power—some force goes out of you."

"It's a sane philosophy, and you live up to it. Good-night."

"Good-night." And she shook hands with him like a boy.

As he raised his hat, he gave the conventional leave-taking smile. She didn't return it for the primitive reason that she didn't feel like smiling. Gravely she ducked her head to him, bounded up the steps, and vanished. He heard her eager step, ringing with vitality, reverberate through the grimy porch.

Repertory work is the best training for the stage. It develops versatility.

In *The Fountain*, a modern play in Webster's repertoire, Tony played a cockney, a drunken cockney, a dirty cockney—and very much she enjoyed it. When she was made up for the part, "Well, I do look a harpy." And Tony gazed at herself in the glass with considerable satisfaction. "I ought to be dirtier, though," she cried, in the true spirit of the artist. "Perhaps the furnace man would give me a bit of black off the poker." Under the stage, among the stored scenery, Tony found the furnace man.

"Lend me the poker," said she, "or that dirty shovel will do." He looked up at her, and taking her in her sordid disguise for one of the charwomen, he swore at her.

When she emerged from the gloom of underground and bumped into Hearn near the iron exit door, she positively startled him.

"My word! What are you made up for? One of the furies in *The Tempest*?"

Tony's expansive smile lit up her terrifying face, in spite of the fact that her front teeth were obscured under a layer of black court plaster.

"I should enjoy this part," she assured, "if I were a bit surer of my cockney accent."

"You've had plenty of opportunities to perfect yourself in cockney. Model your voice on Louisa Frou-Frou's. Pretend to have a cold in your head and adenoids."

"Really the things I've been told to furnish for this part! The author has asked for skinny arms and fingers; and now you want adenoids."

"You'll produce a fair substitute for them, I don't doubt. Nothing can discomfit you. When I see you bounce from the wings onto the stage, full of noise and vigor, I always say to myself, 'There goes nine stone of self-confidence.'"

Some ten minutes later, when Tony had made her first exit, bawling according to the text, "Go to 'ell," she came off on a large round, as theatrical parlance has it, very warm and breathless. While wiping her face on her apron, "Lud," said she, to whomever chose to listen to her, "it's a relief sometimes to get away from sweet parts. Come on with cherry lips and a white nose, and a college boy here and there will like you, to be sure. But that's not acting. No. Go on as I did now, with a face to stop a clock, and there's no vanity, no airs, between you and your work. You can feel the pulse of the house. You're just a poor old dirty bit of humanity and all the gallery will



take you to their hearts. You get at the core of the people."

After every production the Websterites would draw long faces when they saw Tony, and say, "You've come a cropper in your new part." The English—and it is a contradictory characteristic of a race neither cruel nor untruthful—as well as reveling in practical jokes, excel in what they call chaffing.

The worst of Tony's persecutors was David. He could not forbear to tease and badger her. He took a personal pleasure in seeing her flush, in hearing her expostulate in her Southern voice with its lilting cadence. Not that he was growing to love her. He would have denied it—laughed at the suggestion. No, he felt for her something saner than love—something perhaps tenderer, too. She enchanted him, she was so new to life, so unspotted from the world. She completed him so well. He was old in spirit, complex, used, with the undisciplined nerves of the artist. She no doubt was a dear creature, pleasant to be with, but as to falling in love with the girl—why, a jolly cabin boy never seemed less insidious than Tony. Yet David was to learn it is not safe to trust these boyish-seeming women. They turn feminine in a glance and have a perilous charm.

## CHAPTER XI

TONY was persecuted, but she was unruffled. Only one thing in her new life hurt her. She had lost all part in her past. She could not accustom herself to the scarcity of letters. Every night she would ask "Anything for me, Door-keeper?" And when he took out the mail from Box E, sorted it, and shook his head, an unreasonable surprise overtook her, a sadness quite disproportionate to its cause. "Well, it will be for to-morrow then instead, Door-keeper," she would say in a comforting voice, and banish melancholy by a skipping ascension of the stairs.

Once in her dressing-room she was happy, always. The fascination of the theater consists in its absorbing futilities. The imagination is tied down to the present. The mind never sees ahead beyond the next quarter of an hour. The rouge must go on the cheeks, next the black on the eyes; the horizon is bounded by little duties. This sampling of time goes to make a sort of happiness, fictitious perhaps, but absorbing enough to keep anxiety away. "So-and-so is saying his big speech," thinks the actress, waiting for her cue. "The evening must be so and so far advanced." And from the nightly recurrence of some such incident she draws a sort of scholastic peace.

It was good to get home to a fire, a cup of bovril, and dear Pickwick. There he sat, waiting on the hearth—a solitary one of the Lares, or Penates if you prefer. In Leeds, on her return, Tony most often found him in contemplation before the ornament of the center-table, three stuffed canaries under glass. These birds held for Pickwick an interest little short of morbid. "I had a clap, Samuel," or "They

didn't like me much to-night," Tony would say in the expansion of her soul. And Pickwick, removing his eyes from the mortuary aviary, would extend a paw in gracious recognition. "Just like Queen Victoria's picture, where she is represented holding out her hand to be kissed," Tony would declare, when describing her interviews with Pickwick. "Samuel's dear front leg is short and pudgy, just as Queen Victoria's was."

Twice a week, pen in hand, Tony squared her shoulders to write home. But what could she say to her own people now? The actor's life cuts him off from the rest of humanity. He sleeps when the world is awake. He eats when no one else is eating. And at night he works when others seek for enjoyment.

Little by little the ties of home grow frayed. The actor is severed from all on the opposite side of the footlights. He is saturated in the essence of the theater; impervious to life beyond the stage door. Think of it! Never a day—free! Always rehearsing, always repeating the same words night after night! Always painting the face, only to wipe off the laborious flush after two hours. Always interviewing managers, writing to landladies, supervising dressers, always packing and unpacking the theatrical hampers! Even on a Sunday after a journey the Understudies rehearse, disrespectful of the day of rest. In the theater, dim with English fog, all through the Sabbath afternoon the actors mimic the passions while the bells sound to church.

One Sunday evening in Edinburgh—the tour had extended to Scotland, Wales, and Ireland—Tony, leaving the stage door, came face to face with a group of churchgoers, hymn-book in hand, looking as sour as only the Scotch can look, when they are not drunk, on the Sabbath. It was then for an instant that Tony saw herself as her step-mother must see her, as a vagabond, an outcast, to whom the

church some seven hundred years ago would have refused burial in consecrated ground.

A nomad race these actors—a community by themselves. A people belonging to no definite station of life nor period of time, for their habits, idiosyncrasies, superstitions have not changed since the age of Molière. Like the Quaker or the gipsy, they have their own etiquette, their own code of honor. Each touring company is a tribe, camping on the face of the earth.

Rarely—oh, so rarely—a letter from home! Felton, however, wrote to Tony weekly, encouraging her in her art, giving her hints such as only the old stagers know. He discussed the mooted question as to whether or not an actor should feel his part—experience actually the emotion he represents. “Bernhardt,” Felton wrote, “has told me she could never move an audience unless she herself were moved. Coquelin, however, in the parting love scene in *Cyrano*, would keep a house in tears while secretly tickling the leading lady. I have heard him say that stage emotions, like stage scenery, should be artificial, and that the actor becomes grotesque when he suffers really.”

Tony was of the former school. She lived the life of her characters, laughed and sobbed with them. Why, one matinée she cried all through the first entre-act of *As-You-Like-It*, to think that Phoebe should love some one who didn't care for her. But these were delicious, beneficial tears that did not scald the eyelids as does the everyday brine of life.

In all these months Mr. Meredith's aristocratic hand had never traced his daughter a line. Tony's step-mother, however, wrote to her off and on. Mrs. Meredith's letters were tracts: *How to Keep Respectable Though an Actress*. And indeed she showed considerable ingenuity in her setting forth of stage bugbears. Each paragraph was a warning

finger, as it were, pointed to perdition. The theater was a moral tight-rope and the actress the equilibrist. According to Mrs. Meredith, champagne corks popped in the wings, while centaurs in top hats and terribly appreciative of feminine beauty, lurked at the stage door. Like all the uninitiated, it was of the managers, however—a most morally maligned race—that Mrs. Meredith felt the acutest distrust. According to her, the running of a theater, the producing of plays, and other such trifling duties left plenty of spare time in which to persecute unsophisticated girls. These letters bewildered Tony. That her step-mother should think so badly of the world hurt her.

Mrs. Meredith's effusions, nevertheless, ended at times on a more chatty note, the description of some function she had attended and perhaps a sketch of her wearing apparel thereat. The good lady's kind but futile nature reveled in haberdashery lists. Tony tried whole-heartedly to visualize the *draperie grecque*, the *entre-deux*, and all the rest of it, for she was grateful for letters—touched to hear from home, eager to greet the far-traveled American postage stamp.

Yes, to judge from Mrs. Meredith's letters she considered "the boards" as the very kindling wood of hell fire. David, for his part, trembled less for Tony's soul than for her taste, her delicacy. He feared for her the smirching effects of touring—the dust of the road, as it were—the moral smuts that settle gradually and dirty a nature.

Tony never guessed that in this young man glowering at her from a distance she had a guardian. How could she suppose he watched over her when he never came near her, for since their talk on the property basket he perversely refused to speak with her? He respected himself inordinately for thus avoiding her. From the start, his interest in her was secret, aping indifference, obstinate and shy.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona was under rehearsal. As the Websterites filed onto the stage, you might have taken them for an orphanage, with their big black Shakespeares like bibles under their arms. The cast was complete except for the dog's part. The interesting Lancelot had no exponent.

"Miss Ethgrete has a little fat dog with asthmatic trouble who might fill the rôle," Mr. Hearn suggested pleasantly.

Tony bridled. "Pickwick," she declared, "would never consent to go on the stage."

"You can't call appearing in one part 'going on the stage,' Miss Ethgrete," laughed Pa. "One performance doesn't make a professional. Come, lend us your little dog." And Tony, full of scruples, consented.

When she fastened Pickwick's leash to lead him to the theater, she could hardly meet the gaze of his portentous eye. But once before the footlights, what was her surprise to see him paddle through the rôle with entire composure. To be sure, the part was in character, a thinking part, without much action.

The first night of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Samuel was called before the curtain with the comedian and received an ovation. Only Mr. Hearn was skeptical. He made disparaging remarks on Pickwick's performance, especially his stage walk. And if to offend Tony was what David had been laboring for during the last three months, he got his way.

That night, as Tony was leaving the theater, Pickwick at her heels, Eglantine joined her and asked to be allowed to escort her to her digs. For the last few months the juvenile lead had become insistently attentive to Tony, and as he drooped towards her now like a lily dying of thirst, he all but edged her off the pavement. En route, in his sweet, penetrating voice, he condoned with her for staying alone in digs, which indeed at present was the case, Mon-



dragonie this week being lodged elsewhere. He was cooing more sweet nothings when suddenly he glanced over his shoulder. "There's some one following us," he said. Behind them a footstep was keeping pace with theirs. Eglantine peered down the street. "Oh, it's only David Hearn coming this way." And through the dark, like the echo of their feet, the step resounded obstinately.

At Tony's door, "Suppose I slip in and have a chat with you—you wouldn't mind that, now would you?" insinuated Eglantine.

"No, I can't say I'd *mind* it," Tony answered accurately.

"Egg!" shouted Hearn, coming level with the house. "I want a word with you."

"Sorry. Miss Ethgrete has just asked me in," crooned the juvenile lead, beginning to unwind the muffler from his lovely white throat.

"If you go in, you'll be fined half a crown. It's against the rules," warned David.

"I don't mind. But of course, Hearn, you wouldn't tell the management, now would you?"

"In a moment. But I won't tell, because you won't go in." And David gave Eglantine's overcoat a tweak that brought the young man stumbling down the steps.

"Sneak!" said the juvenile lead, in a melancholy voice. And he remained where he stood, inert.

In three bounds David came up the steps to Tony. "You ought to know better," he grumbled, with the cross familiarity of a father. And he hustled Eglantine away, complaining, through the night.

Next evening David and Tony met—oh, by the merest chance. It was during the performance of *The Winter's Tale*, just before the sheep-shearing scene. The soles of their shoes must have been slippery, and they came face to face on either side of the rosin tray.

"I hope," David ventured, making a blatant effort to

ingratiate himself, "that after his exertions of last night Samuel Pickwick seems fit?"

Miss Ethgrete, however, was not his dupe. "You are more than kind," answered she. And it must be confessed that when Tony assumed the grand manner Mr. Meredith himself would have been proud of her.

"The Merry Makers!" the call boy shouted as he ran past, fastening a wolf skin to his shoulder, his poppy wreath askew, for in his spare moments Jimmy graced the stage. "The ladies and gentlemen for the sheep shearing!"

Simultaneously Hearn and Tony stepped into the rosin tray, and with a knock they came together.

"I was going to ask you to do me a favor," said David, looking down on the crown of Tony's head.

Now it is difficult to be majestic when you're standing in a rosin tray and your nose is brushing the chest of the person you intend to squelch. Nevertheless Tony, remembering David's flippant references to Pickwick, murmured something sardonic, beginning "Pray proceed——"

"It's simply this. I've written a play, *The Crest of the Wave*, it's called. Oh, it's a rotten thing; but Pa seems to think it's good in spots. He's going to give one show of it so I can get it copyrighted. And if you would care to play the heroine's part—the slave Tullia she's named—why, it might give you a chance to show Pa what stuff you are made of—and, you'd oblige me very much."

Tony stepped out of the rosin tray. "Oh, Mr. Hearn," said she. And smiled on him bewilderingly. Gratitude, wonder, affection almost suffocated her. Here she had been thinking hard things of him and he had come to her, offering her what was dearest to him—his work. He was her friend then.

"Oh, Mr. Hearn, I'm so happy. I feel I could float into the flies like a balloon."

Straining and creaking, the curtain was rising. A fetid

draught blew from the auditorium into the wings. Tony stepped into the rosin box. She pawed with her right foot, she pawed with her left, and went off to answer her cue, glancing back caressingly over her shoulder at Hearn.

When from under her curls Tony looked at you with wide eyes like a shepherd boy used to facing the sun in windy spaces, she was very grave and very engaging. But when she smiled, just as she did now at Hearn—well, Tony was irresistible. You wanted to hug her. Her mouth crinkled, a ripple of amusement, as it were, ran up her face and eddied into two dimples—two dimples set not quite opposite, in either cheek; her lips parted, and, in this heart of a rose which was her open mouth, her teeth shone white as a root-fed fawn's.

A star part! It seemed that her feet were wings, that her heart was joy knocking in her breast.

## CHAPTER XII

THE Call Board announced "The Crest of the Wave, by David Hearn. To be read Thursday, the 7th February." Then followed the cast. Tony went hot and then cold, to see her name heading the list. Leading Lady! Oh, let her keep a humble spirit! Let her be unassuming as a super!

Hearn coming to the reading, his manuscript under his arm, found the Websterites seated on the stage in a semi-circle, looking uncommonly sour. Webster himself was not present. Sometimes he withdrew into the background and let the younger stage folk work out their own salvation.

"Hearn's three-act atrocity isn't even to be in our repertoire. We're only to play it once. It's pure loss," snarled Ruth Latimer. "As if we weren't already choked with work!"—"And Pa isn't to produce it—no, my dears, but Hearn himself if you please," caps Mrs. Jack. "Hush, he's begun." David had started to read. He stood most of the time, leaning on a desk close to the footlights. He read well, with vigor and expression. Sometimes he recited, for he knew certain speeches by heart. Then he would fix the actor for whom he was speaking with a keen, almost challenging stare. As he finished each act, Miss Groggarty, who was timing the play, watch in hand, called "Curtain."

"Oh, I will try and do you proud." The reading had ended. Tony was gasping out her gratitude to the author. "Granny Firkin next me kept muttering 'Fine situation! Strong curtain! Good! Good!'"

David smiled acidly. The attitude that most of the company had assumed towards his work had enraged him

Now in groups the Websterites conspired on the stage, finding fault with their rôles, fermenting in discontent.

"I'm getting fed up with these villainesses and dagger fights," hissed Latimer, whose ambition was to impersonate clinging Francesca da Rimini and betrayed Margheretas. "And poor Eglantine!"—she laughed maliciously—"The High Priest's part! Only three lines and a lot of props to handle, torches to light and basins to carry about like a steward. I wouldn't stand it, Egg, if I were you. You're no super!"

"No," cried Eglantine, taking fire like a fuse, "I won't. Mr. Hearn!"

"Yes?"

"Why wasn't I given a part—a part such as I am accustomed to?"

"Because in my opinion you're usually wrongly cast."

"In your opinion then I'm not suited to juvenile leads."

"You're not suited to my juvenile lead, who's a simple, straightforward fellow."

"You mean I'm melodramatic?"

"Lord, no—you haven't the vitality!"

"You dare to insinuate that I'm—stagey?"

"If you prefer it, theatrical."

"Theatrical! Ha-ha! Stagey!" And suffocating, Eglantine collapsed into a chair.

Call an English actor indistinct, incompetent, without technique, without memory, tell him he can't act,—he may forgive you; but breathe the reproach "stagey," and for some occult, professional reason, you offend him mortally.

On one of his cheerful days, "My play will be successful," jubilated Hearn to Tony. "It's patriotic, sentimental, obvious, maudlin, and utterly unconvincing—in fact, just what the public wants."

"The poor public," Tony said. "I've always found it had good taste. What does it want that it shouldn't want?"

"It wants all the i's dotted. It wants to be nudged to shudder or to laugh. It wants what it was brought up on: the plump girl in a pair of page's breeches; the tenor who breaks his sword when he is asked to surrender; the chesty chorus who tremolo 'We swear!'; the comedian who kneels to a ripping noise. Originality offends a British audience. Realism makes it peevish. A theater public is a conventionalist, a conservative, a cut-and-dried old maid with a taste for a suspicion of ribald humor, a retrogradist—the most old-fashioned thing left in England. I'll tell you a story—a true story. In the days of Queen Victoria two ladies were sitting in the stalls. When the curtain fell on Antony and Cleopatra, 'Do you like Cleopatra?' one asked. And the other answered: 'I hardly know. She's so unlike our own dear Queen.' There you have the average British audience."

But, as a matter of fact, no one knows what the public wants. No one can predict the success of a play. That the actor is a believer in omens, a propitiator of fate, a worshiper of good luck, is hardly surprising when one considers the unaccountability of triumph or failure in this mysterious profession.

David did not prove a magnanimous producer. There was something out of kilter in his nature; and yet, just as he seemed to tyrannize meanly over his actors, dictating, scolding, he would suddenly grow human, say he was new to the business, concede a point, praise finally, bringing all the charm of his ugly vivid face to bear in a sudden flashing smile. For, in spite of his crabbed humor, his satirical wit, his world-weariness, he was very young really, and not as experienced as he would have had you believe. His youth showed suddenly in his voice, in his smile, in his sprints of



animation. He was very charming then, in these recurrences of crude boyhood.

If anything in Tony's play displeased him, he would leap onto the stage, and gripping her by the elbow, pace her up and down, looking at her closely as he talked, shaking her almost, and suddenly her heart would start to beat in a fashion that surprised and disconcerted her. He and Tony squabbled freely as to the worth of the histrionic art.

"It's a curious psychological certainty," David philosophized, "that while I have an entire contempt for all the world individually, humanity is formidable to me as a crowd. Last night I played a new part. I had stage nerves. Yes, I was afraid—afraid of those hulks of flesh on the other side of the curtain. I had a look at them from the prompt corner. There they sat, rows upon rows of them, with their chins sagging. I shook my fist at them and I felt better. I'm like Booth. I daren't go on the stage till I've said to myself 'Damn the audience!' a sentiment hardly inductive to sympathetic acting."

"I'm just the other way round," Tony cried. "I understand only through the audience. I get into their breasts to feel the play. And while I'm with them I love every one of them."

"Electrical sympathy, brazen self-confidence, and the boo-hooing faculty, which all goes to show that you're a born mummer."

"Mummer, mime, barn-stormer—go on. We're a persecuted profession, upon my soul we are!" And Tony crossed her arms and stared David up and down in a bellicose fashion. "We weren't thought good enough for your churchyards seven hundred years ago, and now you call us names? Why? How are we inferior to other artists? Is our work so contemptible? Is it an easy thing to make some 1200 people laugh and cry a night? What more do

you ask of any art? Can music, or poetry . . . or sculpture do more? Are we vainer than other artists?"

"Pshaw!" sneers David. "An actor's not an artist at all. He's a mixture of a charlatan, a troubadour, and a hair-dresser, with a big dose of the woman, the dregs of a woman—her sentimentality, her easy tears. Look at Eglantine. There's a young actor of promise, if you will. As a man we all know what he's worth. The poor fellow is a reincarnation of some houri of the East who lolled in a harem and hennaed her nails. Yet once he gets before the footlights, if you're not melted by his pathos you must have a cobble-stone for a heart. There he poses like a blonde gazelle, rolls his long-lashed eyes to the gallery, plays the scales up and down his voice, and every woman in the theater weeps like an urn. Oh, he has talent of a sort, the fat, pigeon-breasted play actor."

"Fiddle-dee-dee!" cries the exasperated Tony. "He seems to me a quiet, melancholy boy. And what I like about him is that he's so kind to animals—to Pickwick and the black cat."

"Bah ! That's his superstition. And as for melancholy—of course he's melancholy. He's regretting he wasn't born a Gaiety Girl."

Tony's faith in Eglantine, however, remained firm. Indeed she saw others in the kindest light always. Had she been told that So-and-so was bow-legged, she would probably have answered, "How nice not to be knock-kneed." If her friends had no teeth, she could still admire their gums. And in her eyes pock marks were dimples.

The Crest of the Wave was under way. Imagine some twenty mummers, with each a preconceived conception of his part, with suggestions to offer and complaints to make. Hear Eglantine, for instance. He's hurt; yes, frankly, he's sore. Does Mr. Hearn take him for a walker-on—he, Esmé

Eglantine, to be cast for a rôle of three lines? Oh, let him smile, etc., etc.

"Mr. Hearn, why don't you let him say one of the slave Tullia's speeches?" suggests Tony, who wants every one to be happy. "One of my speeches—those beautiful words, something about duty and the gods?"

"Impossible!" cries the author. "Why, Tullia is a lovely girl who is abducted by the emperor and taken to the palace."

"But why should she be what's-its-name? Why should she be taken to the palace?"

"Oh, but she must," assures David. "It's the plot. Besides, her lover's there to meet her. It's the only excuse for his being there."

"Well," from the indomitable Tony, "why need he be there?"

"Oh, but I've written a speech for him, page 52. When he comes in crowned with vine leaves and drunk. 'Call not the grape the tomb of vain ambition——'"

"Yes, yes; we remember," Eglantine interposes. "Don't trouble about me, pray."

"I'll tell you what I can do. I'll write you a speech——"

"No, no," Patsy Groggarty interrupts. "The play's too long as it is. It must be cut."

At the word "cut" the author becomes rabid and reviles Miss Groggarty. Tony distracts him.

"What does the slave Tullia wear?"

David opens the script. "It says," he concludes, "appropriate dress of the period."

"What is appropriate dress of the period?"

"I'm sure I don't know," admits the author candidly. "Something white and her hair done up in a knot."

"Oh, no, down—hanging down," protests Tony. "Ladies who are going to be abducted always wear their hair down."

At last the rehearsal gets under way. Miss Ethgrete

takes the center of the stage, reading out of her script: "The slave Tullia approaches and sinks on her knees to the emperor." "Who is the emperor?" asks Tony, who only sees a collection of gentlemen in overcoats.

"Here!" cries one of the actors. And Tony plumps down before him. "Let me see. What do I say? Oh—'Hear this prayer for my lover——'"

"It clears up the plot," suggests David, "if you designate your lover. So will you just point to him if you don't mind?"

"I don't mind a bit, but which is he?"

"Here!" cries another of the actors.

"Thanks!" says Tony and resumes:

" 'Hear this prayer for my lover.  
Nay, turn not away——'

"The script says 'She clings to his knees.' To whose knees—the lover's knees?"

"No, the emperor's knees."

So it goes all day, till out of this stuttering, and stumbling and chaos a story takes shape. Heavens! how easy all this looks from the other side of the footlights. Yet there isn't a posture that hasn't been combined, plotted. It has taken all the producer's ingenuity to bring a mistress into her lover's arms.

As the rehearsals progressed, Eglantine became more and more fretful. His rôle didn't suit his temperament, he complained. However, if the truth were known, it wasn't the insignificance of his part that made him so peevish—no; what riled him was that his rôle required a quick change. He had to peel out of a tunic and a pair of tights just to introduce himself into another pair of tights and a turreted miter in a bare five minutes. Now no chorus girl on the wane and aware that the theater was crammed with the eldest sons of the English nobility ever made up her face

with a more scrupulous attention than did Eglantine. After such a quick change as the part in Hearn's play demanded, the juvenile lead saw himself forced to answer his cue, breathless with hurry, his make-up smudged, his wig askew, the stuffing of his legs front to back. The mishaps that could ruin his chemical beauty were legion.

The dress rehearsal of *The Crest of the Wave* showed him he was no Frégoli at a quick change and that his chance of being ready—by ready he meant looking his best—to take up his cue was infinitesimal. Well, then he would miss his cue. He wouldn't make his entrance. The emperor should succeed in seducing the slave Tullia. He, Eglantine, the High Priest, would not interfere, as arranged, but stay in the wings. It would be no fault of his. He had told the author he couldn't make the change in the given time, whereupon the author had answered something very ungentlemanly about a fat, false anatomy.

Hearn should regret those words. Eglantine swore it with the ferocity of the vain.

## CHAPTER XIII

It was the 28th of February, the night of Hearn's production. Tony's trial by fire was come. She was making up, Mrs. Jack and Mondragonie at each elbow.

"It's Friday," encouraged Mrs. Jack, "a lucky day in the profession."

"And the moon's waxing—that's a good sign," cheered Mondragonie.

Indeed, Tony had reason to feel assured of success, having been presented by her friends with some very potent mascots, a tiger's whisker, a Marzipan pig, and an authentic hair of Mrs. Kendal's. Nevertheless, her heart beat fit to snap her ribs; and in the stuffy dressing-room she shuddered with cold—with that icy, swooning weakness that the traveler experiences in the qualms of seasickness.

"You do look bad," Mrs. Jack sympathized. "Take something, dearie, do. Jack says there's nothing like champagne and stout, equal portions, mixed. It's the *pro's* drink—— Who's that knocking? W'at, oh? Oh—Mr. Hearn. Want to speak to Miss Ethgrete? Right, oh."

"Why, you're trembling," David stated, as Tony joined him in the hall.

"Oh, I'll brace up once I'm on. Only I'm a bit gone in the legs. And you?"

"Thanks, I'm all right." And David swallowed.

"Good house?" asked Tony, in a breathless, slightly shrill voice.

"Fine cue at the pit door. See?" And with a jerk of his arm, Hearn designated a window. Tony peeked out. The lights from the public house opposite showed a vista



of faces turned to the theater. All these beings, so insignificant individually, so harmless seeming looked at one by one, now appeared to Tony terrible as they waited there in a mass to judge her. And yet some of them must be kind, she thought, for a mutilated beggar was croaking to them of love and summer and hopping after pennies, his hat in his palsied hand.

"There are a good many people in the house already," David said. "I went down on the stage, and through the curtain I could hear the audience, just like one big monster, rustling and blowing its great nose."

She turned to him and saw him very pale, crumpling his white gloves. Then she knew he was afraid, just as she was, and she took his hand. Author and actress, they clung together, wishing each other good luck in a frenzied agony of nerves such as only artists can understand.

"My God, the overture's begun," whispered Hearn. And he started away from her like a coward who answers his bugle call while he still dares. Tony looked after him. She knew when he had opened the iron door that gave on the stage, for the overture reached her in a gust of brassy melody. Come, she must be brave. He had chosen her. She was fighting for him as well as for herself. This thought for her friend steadied her, and she stepped down the tortuous, dank stairs, praying to do her best.

In the wings all the company, some of the stage hands included, wished Tony luck. Ruth Latimer, fiercely handsome, weighted with barbaric jewels, advanced with a false smile. "My poor child," she condoned, "how badly made up you are."

"Eh? What?" stuttered the débutante, on the verge of panic.

"Come, I'll help you." And gripping Tony by the wrist, Latimer dragged her into the green room.

"What is it, a smut?" asked simple Miss Ethgrete, who

never divined that the powder puff whisked across her face by the Jewess was making havoc of her laborious make-up. She stood still trustfully while Latimer set her wreath askew.

"Miss Ethgrete," hissed Jimmy, "your cue's gone. You'll miss your entrance." And Tony slipped out of the hands of her ill-wisher. Running past a glass, she caught a glimpse of her ravaged face. She had only time to settle her wreath, and puzzled, breathless, shaken, she stepped into range of the audience.

Dazzled by the footlights, mad with fright, she felt ready to sob, like a child lost in the traffic. Dear God, what was she doing here? Why had she ever left home? As though invoking help, she looked up. On a platform between the stage and the flies, close to the proscenium, manipulating the sizzling limelight, the electrician was perched. His eyes met hers. His glance was absorbed, expectant. The interest of this unlettered man steadied Tony and she began to play for him alone. Little by little she felt the whole house come under her spell. She recognized all the stages of attention: first the coughing ceases, then the hiss of whispers and the rustling of programs dies away, and the final sound is a discreet creaking as the audience bends forward in the seats. The house was very still, very non-committal. It gave Tony no clap on her exit. But she was satisfied, for, as she was beseeching the emperor to take her life but spare her honor, she had seen the electrician pass his sleeve across his eyes.

In the wings she stood as though she had run a race, panting. Behind her Eglantine was pacing up and down. "It's a frost—a frost," he kept muttering. "We won't get one curtain." A scimiter beat his fat thigh and he tossed his bewigged head in contempt. In the wings opposite Tony a dresser was lurking to help with a quick change, dodging like a bottle-holder to catch his principal. Beside

him Granny Firkin was preparing for her entrance. She was scolding and growling to herself to get into the proper state of mind, for in the play she was an outraged matron. As her scene approached, this old actress, twisted with rheumatism, seemed to hear the call of the theater. She grew straighter, taller, and as her cue sounded, this woman who could hardly walk, who would probably have been bed-ridden if she hadn't belonged to the profession, threw away her cane and strode onto the stage as erect, as terrible as Vengeance.

On Tony's second entrance she felt the audience tense, strung-up for the climax of the act. Her scene brought the curtain down and she heard her first clap, a roar of approval.

Her first applause! What actress can forget it? The theater for her was a disputed kingdom and lo, it has accepted her rule.

Hearn came behind the scenes and all the company who had sulked over his play now congratulated, kissed, hugged him. Only Eglantine stood aloof, with the airs of a wounded lion. Tony, too, suddenly shy, waited in the prompt corner where Hearn found her.

"Are you pleased with me?" she asked.

And he answered: "You have made my play!"

She experienced a sense of happiness, of peace—the relief of a mother after the pangs of childbirth.

"Pa's in front," said David, "and some of the Syndicate." The Syndicate was the mysterious power that backed Webster. "Pa's taken them to have a drink. They like it—I don't mean the drink only, but the play." And Hearn went off to his seat in the stalls as Jimmy called the act.

In a crescendo of passion the play sweeps to the climax. The house is poignantly still and Tony's big scene begins. The emperor, after much nefarious scheming, has managed to meet the slave Tullia tête-à-tête. He declares his passion. He offers her considerable plate. She waves him aside

with a childish dignity. Such worldly trumpery cannot tempt her, she assures. In fact, she says pretty much what every right-minded slave should say to an obscene old emperor, among other things, "Rather than such ignominy," she cries, throwing out her arms, "give me death." A volley of applause clips her last words, sudden and sharp.

"Give me death!" says Tony again, for this is Eglantine's cue to come on the stage and rescue her.

"Death!" she shouts louder than ever. But no Eglantine.

In a whisper and a cold sweat, "Where is that prize jackass of a high priest?" asks Tony of the emperor, who is holding her embraced. "How should I know?" says the emperor in an agonized murmur. "Go on talking."

Go on talking, indeed; but what could she talk about? She had spoken her mind pretty freely to the emperor before he had caught her. Now she stood with her face buried in his chest and thought of some questions to ask him. Only idiocies occurred to her, worthy of a foreign grammar.

At first tentatively, then blatant, sure of not being hushed, laughter spread through the house—that brutal, derisive laugh against the actor. Tony looked up in the emperor's face and saw it beaded with sweat. To be exposed like this, without words, in the footlights, is the nightmare of the profession. She drew away from him and talking, talking, dodged about the stage, while the audience, finding it was of one mind and had so big a voice, stretched its throat in a jeering hullabaloo. Oh, the horror of it!

Meanwhile Miss Patsy Groggarty had girded up her loins and rushed after Eglantine. She found him dabbing rouge on his cheeks and called out to him all the County Cork synonyms for idiot.

"Sorry. I'm coming," giggled the juvenile lead, hys-

terically tightening his waist belt. But when he reached the wings, frightened he stood still, rooted to the spot. He heard the noise no actor forgets, and above the booing, hissing, stampeding, the voice of David Hearn, in a cold fury, ordering down the curtain.

So David's play was a fiasco. He came a cropper, in the vernacular. Eglantine's non-appearance had so blurred the act that the bewildered, and soon turbulent, audience could make neither head nor tail of the rest of the story. Hearn never spoke the speech he had prepared—oh, naïveté of the litterati—beginning "Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to thank you for the warm applause," etc.

He suffered cruelly, the morose and sensitive man.

As for the juvenile lead he was in disgrace throughout the company. Each Websterite looked at him askance as at a deserter. There was talk of Pa dismissing him. Only it was difficult to prove he had missed his cue on purpose. Some say that Hearn, approached by the Syndicate, had in a high-minded pity advised retaining Eglantine's services. Be that as it may, David showed at his best when after his failure he came to Tony, thanked her for her fine work, and told her he was glad that his play had served to prove what she was worth. Then, just as though they had been through the wars together, he and she gripped hands.

After her success, Tony's star was in the ascendant. Though she still belonged to the School and assiduously studied, she rose from playing Odds and Ends to Boys, Old Women, and finally Leads, or at least some Leads. With each night her character developed, her art took form. Juliet or Ophelia, Viola or Rosalind, inhabited her breast, spoke with her voice. The kingdom of the imaginative was always within her reach. She would leave England with its fogs, and in the twinkling of a thought be on the coast of Illyria or in the forest of Arden.



It enchanted her, this life of turmoil and change, of hurry and excitement. Every week a new town, strange streets, different dialects, and never a performance seemed the same, so varied were the audiences; for an actor doesn't tire of a part so long as his public changes. Every night he lives a dual life. His body is on the stage, but his artistic intelligence is disembodied, as it were; it lurks in the gallery with the people, feeling their pulse and watching its corporeal self from afar, dissecting, inspiring.

The instant the actor comes on the stage he senses his public, just as when you step on deck the wind blows on you hot or cold. They're dull to-night, he feels; or, They're a good house; or, They're nervous and inclined to laugh in the wrong places. And his player's instinct, like antennæ, stretches out all over the building. He divines every trend of thought in the audience. He is conscious where to pause, where to hurry his tempo, so as to fix the attention; and he comes off the stage exhausted, having expended his will power, his magnetism, in keeping these rows of minds fixed on him.

Often with every town he visits the actor develops a new method. In touring a country, you pass through zones of audiences. In Scotland, you have stodgy but intelligent listeners; in Ireland you have no listeners at all, but an intuitive people who feel; in England, discernment of talent is shown in the Midlands and Lancashire, but beware of the aggressive, bewildered audiences of some of the manufacturing towns; and above all, of the fashionable public—silly and sensual. Nothing is worse than to play to a modish house. You can never touch an audience when it is rigged up and therefore self-conscious. Children make ideal listeners for everything but love scenes, and nothing invigorates a farce like a drunken person or so in the house.

The star system has at least the merit of keeping peace



in a company. Now all Mr. Webster's ladies were by the ears. For every new rôle there were at least three candidates,—Latimer, Mondragonie, or Ethgrete; and if Ethgrete, why not Jonesey or Louisa Frou-Frou? So argued this democratic company, this nest of intrigue, jealousy, and young, vigorous ambition.

Now when Tony first joined Webster's, Ruth Latimer, a Jewess vibrating to her finger-tips with the artistic talent of her race, was head and shoulders above the other competitors. For the present this Israelite had the pick of the parts. Tony was, however, coming up rapidly in the skirmish; her originality, her daring, appealed to Pa. She was as yet, however, not powerful enough to alarm the Company. They little knew the stuff that was in her. So, with the tendency a jealous crowd always has to praise the second best, the Websterites put Tony forward, pitted her against the grasping Jewess.

After all these months of suppression, of disgrace, it rather flattered her to be shoved like this to the front. To be sure, she was merely used as a buffer—and for all her simplicity she knew it—against the intriguing Latimer, that usurper of parts. Nevertheless, Tony enjoyed her importance, and when her satellites disputed the honor of seeing her home, she listened contentedly, a pleasant dimple in each cheek. Tony was too good-hearted, however, to make a fine conspirator. Not so Latimer, whose plots and counterplots would have done credit to a Machiavelli. The star dressing-room, the attentions of the Dresser, were so many bones for which she fought. The Company was torn in a civil war.

To watch Tony gaining ground in the Cast, Ruth Latimer suffered cruelly. Only an actress could understand how much. During the famous scene between Olivia and Viola, she would sneak out of her dressing-room into the corridor and listen. Tony's voice reached her in gusts. "If she

talks so loud," to herself she would say, "she won't be able to make her crescendo and she'll miss her round."

"Farewell, Fair Cruelty!" It was Tony's final speech, ringing like a clarion. For a moment, silence. Latimer holds her breath, hoping. Surely if the clap were coming, it would have come by now; when, sudden as a volley of musketry, the applause bursts through the house. Latimer turns away, feeling sick.

Yes, the Company was divided into two camps, and it must be admitted the spirit of jealousy and scandal was ever on the alert in both factions. The School sided with Latimer. It was the fashion among these hobbledehoys to quote, imitate, worship this masterful Jewess as dark and determined as Jael. Tony, heading the opposite party, had for her lieutenants Mrs. Jack, Eglantine, and Mondragonie.

Only David Hearn and dear old Granny Firkin kept out of the brawl—he, unsociable, self-absorbed, dreaming of the curves of some statue to be, she too old and too wise to mix in all this hullabaloo. These two were good friends. You might have seen them every night of the week that Granny Firkin played, leaving the theater together, the old lady, in her poke bonnet and pelisse, leaning on the young man's arm, for David always saw Granny Firkin home to her supper,—a bowl of bread and milk.

But whose was that brindled form that might at any hour be seen slipping slyly through the stage door and lurking in the wings with the smile of a toad? Whose was the tail that kept time when the orchestra played? Oh, confusion! It was Samuel Pickwick's. Since his theatrical début a change had come over this respectable animal, whose life of method, of propriety, had till then been the admiration of all. The conservative Pickwick—Tony was forced to confess it—was stage-struck.

The deterioration in his character was painful to behold. He grew subtle, crafty, a sycophant. He fawned on the

stage manager. And for fear of being expelled, he paddled about in the theater as stealthily as an assassin, drawing in his toe-nails.

To be forced to witness the once-reserved Pickwick now frisking with crooked knees and hypocritical tail was as mortifying to Tony as to come across a highly-esteemed teetotaler friend unmistakably intoxicated.

## CHAPTER XIV

At a public house in Sheffield, the "Elephant and Castle,"—a name that dates from the Spanish Armada, probably a corruption of the Infanta of Castile, Tony one morning was busy making the dumb-bells fly, when David Hearn strode in.

"I've just hung Eglantine over the banister," smiled David with a dangerous blandness, "and dropped him half a flight."

"Oh, poor thing!" the spontaneous Tony cried. "Did he land all right?"

"If you mean did he reach the basement, he did—I heard him."

"Well," Tony cried out expansively, "I don't know who I sympathize with, or what I think about it, but I'm in a most terrific state of emotion."

"Ethgrete, you're like the rabble," Hearn growled, "ignorant and stormy and childish. You have the heart of a crowd." And he went out, hurtling the door.

"He is very queer, but I like him," declared Tony with conviction.

That night after the theater, as David was walking with Tony to her door, he described what had taken place in the morning between himself and Eglantine. He had trounced the juvenile lead soundly, he assured, because of the juvenile's attentions to herself.

"I don't want to think of that cad hanging about you when I'm gone."

"When you're gone?"

Yes, he was leaving for London, he explained, and soon.

A statue was to be erected in memory of the crew of the Titanic. He had been allotted the work. It was a trust that might make any sculptor proud. And holding her by the hand, in the intimacy of the foggy night, he told her how in his mind he saw the statue. As he spoke, she felt him eluding her, getting back to his own work, to London and to fame. She listened with anguish almost; every gesture of his seemed to estrange him from her somehow more and more. What, not a word of regret at leaving the theater—at losing Granny Firkin and herself! Could an inspiration, a creative thought, so abolish all ties, so blot out the past?

That night she slept badly and asked herself often: "Who can I make a friend of since he's going?"

The next night as Tony was making up David knocked on her dressing-room door. She knew it was he by the character of the knock. She threw on her wrapper and looked out, her curly mop of hair tossed up any which way, a comb in her hand.

"I'm off to-night by the 9:30," he told her.

"When I'm in London," she said, slinging the comb back into the room, "I shall come and see you. Where do you live?"

"Wouldn't a visit from me to you be more customary? Still, since you will have it, 26 Robert Street is my address."

"What a coincidence! Why, I've stayed there. Isn't the landlady sad and fat, a Mrs. Bulsome Potter?"

"That's the name—that's where I board, and I have my studio there, too, but my workshop is in Full Moon Street." He held his capable hand out to her. "Good-by. We'll meet again, I think, somehow."

"I mean us to. Good-by. The best of luck!" And all the good she wished him seemed to look at him out of her eyes, caressingly. Afterwards he sometimes thought of her just as she appeared now. When Tony smiled at any one

she liked, her smile matured her, made her look a woman. Now for the first time Hearn saw her as something more than a rough little hoyden. In this good-by of theirs she grew up for him. He had taken her by the hand casually,—her hand meant no more than a boy's to him—when suddenly something thrilled from her palm through him, a throb, a stab of sex; and surprised, disturbed, he turned away, thinking: "She likes me; she likes me really."

About this time, "It seems to me," Tony concluded, "that when two people get on—well together, the friend who goes has an easier time of it than the friend who stays." And indeed there were no two ways about it—Tony did miss David. You see, there was no one who could fence like David, nor quarrel as he did. And then Tony had conquered him in a manner. She had appropriated him when he wanted to be independent. She had made him her friend in spite of himself. And this had taken planning and thought and had endeared him to her. His going had caused a vacancy in her life. She had been used to exert on him her will and her quaint humor and what repartee she possessed. She must have shown off for him, too, without knowing it, for all the accomplishments she gloried in, acting, broad-swording, falling off the table, lost their zest for her after he went.

As Sunday after Sunday she traveled from town to town, always northward, always away from London, she couldn't help thinking "Why, I'm going the wrong way." Now the ordinary sentimental girl would have concluded, "I'm in love." Not so Tony. In the first place, she had steeled herself against this weakness, and then, whatever was there to love about David? He was neither handsome nor amiable, and she told herself so frequently. No, she didn't love him—certainly not—but she wished he would write. "Be very careful of my letters, Hall-keeper," she would say, holding up an impressive forefinger at the man in his pen.



Or else she would ask, "Tell me, how long does it take for a letter to reach here from London?"

But as always, her London mail consisted only of Felton's weekly letter. Once he wrote: "To day I met a friend of mine, one of our cleverest sculptors, David Hearn. He tells me he knows you." Tony would have liked to have been told more about David—how he looked and what he said. In the Company he was rarely spoken of now. In the shifting life of the theater every name is writ in water. Indeed, Granny Firkin had been his only other friend. Tony always saw her home now and all the way they talked of David.

Though never a letter came from David, in the world there was some one that had not forgotten Tony—some one that still wrote to her faithfully. Tony's correspondent was Sister Mary Magdalene who had befriended her when she was a little girl in the convent. The good sister wrote that neither footlights nor applause, she knew, could change her Antoinette: whether her 'Toinette served in a convent or a theater, she would remember what she had learnt as a child, to pray God, speak the truth, help the poor. And the good sister went on to tell all the news she knew: how a new altar cloth had been presented to the chapel by Monsiegnur; how a pilgrimage to Lourdes was being organized; how this year the apricot jam, for which the convent was famous, had been of inferior quality, etc., etc. Tony's childhood came back to her in gusts as she turned these innocent pages. Between the acts she would re-read her letter, while the ribald orchestra played and the stage hands, shifting the scenery, swore one at another.

One night in April when Tony reached the theater, she found a note in the care of the Dresser. "Can I see you between first and second acts—a proposition to make to you. Eglantine," she read. She gave orders for him to

be shown up to her dressing-room. Prunella was billed for the night. Tony played the demure heroine and Eglantine was Pierrot. During the love scene in the first act, "Whatever can he want to say to me alone?" thought Tony, while Eglantine was murmuring impassioned lines and gazing at her over his ruff with ardent, charcoaled eyes.

The curtain had been down some five minutes and the orchestra was in full tilt before Tony heard the pit-pat of Eglantine's ballet shoes in the corridor outside her dressing-room. "Come in," she called, without waiting for him to knock. He appeared on the threshold in his fantastic disguise, all striped in black and white, in half mourning like a zebra. He had found the door open and, from a sense of delicacy, had left it so. Tony sat facing him, her little sandaled feet neatly crossed, a glimpse of white stocking showing. A severe fichu kept her primly erect, while her full dress of prune-colored silk seemed to buoy her up. She held a brush in one hand, a comb in the other, and was smoothing the curls that bobbed on either side of her genial and love-provoking face.

"Dresser will be back in a moment with some bovril, Egg, so if you've anything particular to say——"

"I shan't keep you a moment, Ethgrete. I only wanted to know if you would care to marry me."

"Eh?" said Tony.

Her surprise, also her satisfaction, was extreme. It was the first time she had ever received what you might call an out-and-out proposal.

"Good gracious!" said she, laying down the comb and brush and smiling an ingenuous smile as broad as the proverbial Cheshire cat's. "I did notice you were queer lately, but I never imagined you could be in love with me."

"Nor am I," he assured, in his cold and gentle voice. "I am thinking of my future——"

"Well, I never!" gasped Tony, completely mystified.

“——And of yours,” he added, with one of his sweetly noble looks. “Ours is a cruel profession nowadays. In unity is strength——”

“You’re a nice lover *on the stage*,” said Tony, laughing, “more enthusiastic.” And she crinkled her nose at him.

He bent towards her, his satin costume giving out iridescent gleams in the electric light. “You Americans have good business heads. Let me put my proposition before you on a practical business footing. I don’t love you—I repeat it. To be frank with you, I sometimes think I’ve played too many love parts to ever really love. I’ve studied, dissected, the looks, the tones of voice, all the sensations of passion, until the words ‘I love you’ mean stage fright or ‘Shall I get a round’?” As he ceased speaking, he looked down, and she noticed the globs of charcoal clinging to his eyelashes.

“But as you don’t love me and I don’t love you, whatever should we marry for?” queried Tony, growing positively giddy with amazement.

He smiled at her a moment, in tender rebuke, over his ruff. Then continued with the patience of a mother: “I think you have a future. I have one, I know. If we join forces we might prove a second Mr. and Mrs. Frank Benson or Mr. and Mrs. Forbes Robertson. Then done with the provinces!” And he snapped his fingers with the actor’s contempt for a public he is sure of. “We’ll off to London. A success for one of us there will make us both. A London success means a hundred pounds a week. On that we take out a company,—Mr. and Mrs. Esmé Eglantine’s company—our own company. We tour Australia, America, all the young vigorous countries where an actor can set his mark.” His face had grown almost ethereal when speaking of the art he loved.

Tony felt she knew exactly how his mother had looked—monstrous eyes, a mouth hardly big enough to feed with,

a nose straight enough to serve for a ruler. "What a waste," thought she, "for a man to be so pretty." And she was thinking so hard that she forgot to answer him.

"Well, well, shall we marry?" he asked, clasping his hands over which his lace cuffs flowed.

Tony shook her head, and her curls bobbed each faster than the other.

"Does that mean No?" he asked, his under lip beginning to tremble.

"It's no use, Egg, dear; I'm never going to marry." Just then the Dresser came in with the bovril. "Have some, Egg," Tony coaxed, wishing to soften her refusal. "I can drink out of the saucer."

He made an impatient gesture, and began to pace from the dressing-table to the door, undulating in his loose, silk suit like a Spanish dancer.

"Dresser, how can I get into *these* alone?" shouted Louisa Frou-Frou from the dressing-room beyond. "Dresser!" she shrieked again, as though she were on fire. "Coming, dear," hallooed the Dresser. And she scuttled out. For forty years she had been bated to and fro from actress to actress, and cries of hurry, hysterical imprecations, left her cold. She was as agile as a monkey and as nerveless as a dead tooth.

"I suppose the husband you're on the lookout for"—Eglantine had faced about like a spiteful girl—"is a playwright, or an influential critic, or a millionaire with funds in the theater. Pshaw! Do such men ever marry women on the stage except to take them off? After a press agent, what's left for an actress to marry but an actor?"

"Curtain up!" Jimmy bellows, scudding through the hall.

"There," bleated Eglantine in a peevish collapse. "And I'm sure my make-up's gone shiny." He sprang to the looking-glass. "Let me have some powder." Without wait-

ing for permission, he took off the lid of a box of Lily White, screwed into it his handkerchief, which he then passed over his face. "You're losing an exceptional opportunity. You couldn't do better than to take up my offer." And he turned away pouting and with his nose too white.

"It wasn't just my idea of a proposal," Tony confessed to herself as she sipped her bovril. "Though, of course, to be sure, it was a compliment in its way,"—she smiled and two deep dimples eddied into place on either cheek—"still, it wasn't what you'd call a heady experience."

## CHAPTER XV

WITH every day Ruth Latimer grew more virulent against Tony, more burningly envious of her. "What do you find in her so wonderful?" she would ask of the orchestra leader, the program girls, the stage carpenter who always watched Miss Ethgrete's scenes, of the dressers even, who were all Tony's declared admirers. "You could cut her accent with a knife, she has no technique, she slurs half her effects." And the answer came invariably: "I don't know why, but I like her."

Perhaps Tony's habit of speaking the truth, her sweet, straight nature, showed in her work. For on the stage she was simple and sincere. She rang true always. The gallery, that supreme judge of the actor, adored her.

One day: "If Pa gives her Imogen," said Latimer with a quivering under lip, "I'll tear my contract in two."

Cymbeline was on the tapis. The Cast, not yet known, and the two factions on the tiptoe of excitement.

"I by rights ought to play Imogen," Latimer continued. "I signed for juvenile leads. If that Yankee grabs it—I'll finish her somehow. She'll wish she'd never stepped on the British boards." It was in her dressing-room that Latimer spoke this threat, arrayed in all the barbaric splendor of Lady Macbeth. A pair of tweezers in hand, her tongue inflating her cheek, she was pulling out the hairs that fringed her full upper lip. Some of her toadies—they were fewer now—condoled with her. It was cruel—think of it—an American girl with money to be preferred to an old Websterite, to an English artist.

Latimer laid down the tweezers and looked straight be-



fore her. "You can tell her this. If she plays Imogen, let her look to herself. She'll come a cropper."

Hardly were these cryptic words out of the Jewess's mouth when Louisa Frou-Frou, her coronet under her arm—for she was of the Macbeth aristocracy—rushed away to inform Tony. In passing the Call Board she saw the Cast up, and opposite "Imogen, daughter of, etc.," Miss Ethgrete's name.

"Latimer is sore about you," Louisa Frou-Frou told Tony. "She's sick about you, and she'll queer your Imogen—take it from me."

Two weeks later Cymbeline was produced. The first performance came on a matinée. As Tony was making up, "I want to speak to you, Ethgrete," said Latimer, putting her dark and glowering face in at the dressing-room door. "I'm sorry for you, I am, indeed, dear. I hear one of the Syndicate's in front and that he's a tartar. Thank Heaven I'm out of the cast for once and can get a rest! It's bad for your professional reputation to give a show on such short notice."

"Yes, I'll play pretty rottenly, I reckon," agreed Tony. "We've had so few rehearsals. Why, I hardly know my words. Sit down, Latimer, do. Oh, my corsets are on the chair, aren't they? Never mind, chuck 'em over to me. That's it."

"You don't know your words, you say—good catch. I am surprised! I thought you Americans were so quick," and in her voice hissed the primitive race jealousy that competition always stirs to the surface.

Now broad-minded as Tony had always proved when she herself was attacked, her touchy patriotism made her sharp to take offense when her country was referred to. "Yes, we're quick, and what's more, we're sure—we get there," she answered, resenting the Jewess's covert sneer.

"Look here, Miss We-get-there. Just a word of advice. Never you be sure of anything until you've made good, as you say in your own country. You've not played Imogen and scored a hit yet. There's many a slip—you know the proverb."

"It takes two to quarrel and we shan't do it, that's flat." Tony had turned pale and her heart was knocking in her throat. For though she was as brave as a little lion, she dreaded a scene as much as a man does.

"You're a deep one with your Christian sweetness. You're a crafty little lamb. I see your policy well enough: 'I'm a helpless stranger in a foreign country,' you say, or that's what your goings-on imply. 'Look here, you subjects of George V, show you've got some broad-minded hospitality and welcome me to the British boards.' Oh, you're a sly one, Ethgrete, you are. You've known how to get round Pa. You appeal to his soft-heartedness, you do—soft-headedness, I call it. 'I can't bind you to anything, I can't, Mr. Webster,' that's what you say. 'My contract is all in your favor.' But there's one comfort. When you've knocked around a bit more, you'll find all managers aren't so easy. Your rough time's waiting for you, my lady, and then you'll turn tail and go home to your Papa, and your country house, and your South that you've boasted about and rammed down our throats. You came booming yourself across from America, but you'll go back quieter, I'll warrant."

She stopped, short of breath, and with a nervous movement she passed her knitted gloves, that she was holding in her right hand, to her left and back again. At the sight of these baggy mittens Tony felt mollified somehow. They seemed to personify Latimer's piteous struggle with life, her sordid beginnings, her inability to get what she wanted. These uncouth mits were her badge of worldly innocence, as it were.

A sort of painful sympathy came over Tony. She hung down her head and found nothing to say.

"Oh, yes, my blue-blooded princess," Latimer broke out again, and all she felt of bitterness went naked in her voice. Her two years' training in melodrama had stripped her of all emotional modesty. "You think it's funny to be uncomfortable like a real *pro* in digs—to live on a few bobs a week like the rest of us. It's an experiment to you, and you'll keep it up till you're tired of it. That's joking with poverty, that is—that's not right."

Tony went over to Latimer. She put one hand on the Jewess's shoulder and with the other turned the girl's face up to hers. "Look at me—look at me straight in the eyes. There. You've got work to do in the world. You're a fine artist, and what's more, you know it. Your time will come as sure as Jimmy's calling the half now. Life's like a see-saw, down, then up; it's all in the day's work."

"Well, I'm tired of doing all the day's dirty work, I am," answered Latimer surlily, lowering her head. But she did not shake off Tony's grasp, and in the pause that followed, a sort of vigorous, electrical understanding seemed to flow from one to the other.

"Now I must make up," said Tony, turning away. But the Jewess did not offer to go. She sat on, as if hypnotized.

"Look here, Ethgrete," Latimer spoke as if each word cost her an effort—"I want to be straight with you. I like you in a way. I know it doesn't look like it, but I do. We most of us do. It's funny," she added brutally, "we might as well like a thief with his hands in our pockets. . . . Well, I'm desperate. You're cutting me out. And I won't say I'm not afraid, for I am. You're clever. Any one must be jolly clever to get ahead of me. Well——"

"Yes?"

"I'm desperate, I say. I don't mean you to get through

Imogen. I mean to stop you somehow. I mean to queer your show. I've warned you, so there."

Latimer had risen. She stood for a moment at the door, her dark and troubled face aglow with a sort of volcanic beauty. "I don't want it said that Ruth Latimer was ousted by a"—she searched for a word, an adjective to convey all her contempt, her venom—"by a"—she hesitated—"an Amateur. Yes, an amateur," she cried. Then she went out and closed the door on this supreme taunt, the unforgivable insult between actor and actor.

What is more contagious than a cough? Some one had a very bad cold in the gallery that afternoon during the Cymbeline matinée. The cough, like a shuttlecock, went to and fro to the four corners of the auditorium. It rapped out an answer from the stalls. In the dress circle it disturbed some four or five bronchial affections and awoke the chronic cold of the poor in the gallery. The whole theater seemed to vibrate with coughs and the blowing of noses, to shake with the snuffling rhythm of catarrh. Tony took a deep breath and talked louder than the nasal thunder. For some ten minutes she conquered and Imogen lamented in the stillness of the Welsh Hills.

Again the false cough, persistent, regular, as the tapping of a hammer. "Hush!" "Be quiet!" "Go out!" The audience had grown to love Imogen, and Tony, altering the pitch of her voice, stifling it to a whisper, held the silence for a little longer. Then the perfidious cough changed its tactics. It rang out suddenly, irresistibly, in a racking double gallop. And the audience, unsympathetic, but weak, followed suit.

Tony could bear no more.

"Excuse me," said she to Eglantine, in whose arms she was, "just a minute."

In one step she was at the footlights, and tossing her

hair back, she looked up to the gallery and spoke out in the soft, Southern drawl, which, when she used her own words, she never lost:

"I know who you are up there, putting on that cough, and why you're doing it, you sly thing. And if you're not as quiet as a mouse, I'll speak your name right out, here this minute, where I'm standing, and then you'll be ashamed."

Such a commotion ensued. The audience rose as one man, to see who was the coughing enemy. They tittered, they hooted, they hissed "Hush!" They acclaimed Tony's spirit. Rather than cough, they preferred to strangle.

"And now," said Tony, mildly resuming her position in Eglantine's arms, "I want to go on." And she did go on, in a sacred silence, punctuated by frantic applause on the falling of the curtain.

On the whole, when the play was over, she felt elated, and mounted to her dressing-room on the wings of success. At the hall door, near the Call Board, she almost collided with a fur coat and with a very little gentleman who was inside the fur coat. But so majestic was his port, so inflated with consequence, that Tony felt sure he must be the Syndicate. He stared at her over his collar. He had a red eye, like an ardent coal.

"My dear young lady, come here." And he beckoned to Tony with the only finger that protruded from his voluminous sleeve.

"Your Imogen was exquisite."

Tony was so overjoyed that her eyes, her very curls, seemed to dance.

"But wasn't your extempore speech a little daring?" questions the Syndicate, peering sideways through his slit of an eye, to which Tony's independent fling of the chin seems to answer, "I only gave them a piece of my mind."

"But tell me, have you ever had a look at your contract?"

"Oh, yes," says Tony, "I've read it two or three times."

"Do you remember a clause bearing on the artist's addressing the audience?"

"Well, it's a good time since I've——"

"The paragraph I refer to reads: 'The artist shall only address the audience at the cost of dismissal.'"

"Oh, lud, you don't say!" cries Tony, turning pale through her make-up.

"My dear young lady, it's very regrettable, I'm sure," drones the Syndicate, buttoning his fur coat. "Mr. Webster has defended you warmly——"

"God bless him," from Tony, "the dear thing!"

"But order, rule, are the backbone of a theater, and while we must all deplore losing so promising an artist,"—and he looked out to see if it were raining still.

"I'll never do it again—never, never! They may cough their heads off."

"I repeat, it is regrettable. The Company will feel your loss—you will be hard to replace," and he edged his half-open umbrella through the door.

"Give me another chance."

"The error you committed is unfortunately irretrievable. I cannot find it in my conscience to advise the canceling of a rule. You're your own worst enemy, Miss—ahem, I'm afraid." And smiling tolerantly, he toddled away.

In some four days all preparations had been completed for Tony's departure, and her friends came down on her parts like cormorants. The lion's share of her rôles fell to Latimer, that schemer, that false cougher. Tony, who was bashful when vanquished, rather than vindictive, bore the Jewess no grudge. "All is fair in love and war"—and on the stage.

On Friday, the night she was to go from the theater,



Tony came to Pa's dressing-room to tell him good-by. He had been writing at his make-up table and his head was resting on his hand. He was playing Dr. Caius that evening, and through the grotesque mask he had made of his face his spirit, that fantastic, big-hearted soul of his, looked right out of his eyes. It was a letter of recommendation he was at work on for a young actor whom he hoped to help, and for the moment the pen had slipped from his hand, his thoughts gone into space. So Don Quixote must have looked when he was dreaming of strange adventures and distressed innocence.

"Well, it's good-by then," said Tony. And she and her "Pa" looked at each other with long, pale faces.

"If you'd only addressed the audience another day!" was his cry of impotent regret. "What possessed you?"

"The devil," came the gloomy answer.

"Well, well; perhaps it's all for the best. You've sucked the classic drama as dry as an orange."

"If I could be with you a hundred years, I should learn from you always."

"Tony, remember to sound your consonants."

"Yes, yes, my dear master."

"Above all, plenty of exercise. If you're in London you could subscribe to a gymnasium perhaps."

"No doubt, no doubt," Tony answered, swallowing hard. And they shook hands across the table.

"Mr. Webster, I feel like Imogen. You remember when she says 'I may go from east to occident, cry out for service, never find such another master.'"

## CHAPTER XVI

THE spring was again claiming the earth. Even London could not forget that May was here. "The time of the singing of birds was come." Some dozen sooty street sparrows were fighting for crumbs on the windowsill of David Hearn's studio while the young man sat before his unfinished breakfast preoccupied with fancies of the country,—cool, sliding waters, meadows aspiring to the horizon, when a voice as fresh as the matinal hour called: "May I come in?" And round the edge of the door came a tousled head, two luminous eyes, a bewitching smile, and a pointed chin. It was Tony. "I may come in, mayn't I?"

Now considering that David was wedded to art, a philosopher and all the rest of it, he experienced a decidedly exhilarating sensation on hearing again the voice that had been lost to him for some four weeks, that sweet, drawling voice he had so often mimicked. He had a weak spot in his heart for this independent child—he was glad to see her, and that was the truth; though he answered ungraciously enough, "Come in? Oh, yes, I suppose so."

Undiscomfited, Tony emerged from behind the door. She took several steps into the room, and with her hands plunged in her jacket pockets, she looked David up and down with a frank stare, while a dimple hesitated into place on either cheek. "And may Samuel Pickwick come in?" she cooed, with a sudden disarming smile.

"Yes, if you'll run the risk of his eating lead paint."

The little dog had heard his name and now advanced into the room, turning out his toes with the laborious graces of a frog.

"I was given the sack," confided Tony, rocking on her heels. And she told the whole story.

"And now what are you going to do?" asked David, looking at her from under his eyebrows.

"Oh, I've got good news for you. I'm coming to stay here," announced Tony. And with a gesture of the arm she designated the walls and the ceiling.

"By 'here' do you happen to mean my studio?"

"Yes, for my meals. Don't you eat here?"

"I do. But what's that to do with you?"

"Well, you see Mrs. Bulsome Potter has only one bedroom to spare for me and no parlor, so where am I to eat, I ask you?" And Tony's nose crinkled up in a smile, an expansive smile that showed her white teeth, sound as a puppy's.

"So you appropriate my studio. Of all the blatant cheek!" cried the exasperated David.

"Only at mealtimes I appropriate it. And then I pay for what I eat. Good gracious, Mr. Hearn, you'll hardly see me at all. Why, I shall be away all day, interviewing managers."

"Oh, upon my word, you're too ingenuous. You really overdo this unsophisticated business."

"Come now, you'll be glad enough to have my company. You find me very sympathetic, you know you do."

"But think of the scandal. Don't you feel you've no business in and out of a man's studio at all hours of the day?"

"I've certainly business in and out of any place where I can get food, and such pleasant company." And Tony bowed to David. "As for scandal, it likes the social world. It would never thrive up here under the roof. What's in that cupboard?"

"You are a barbarian, Tony, a poor savage—a creature

with no more instincts of propriety than the queen of the Sandwich Islands. That cupboard holds my tools and part of the dinner which I fear I shall now have to share with you." And David collapsed into a chair. "Do you object, Miss Ethgrete, to calling Pickwick off my lay figure? He's chewing it."

"Samuel," Tony sang out, "come away from that nice wooden doll. Don't you dare to touch her. She poses for you, does she, Mr. Hearn? Oh, I dare say she looks better in her clothes. I suppose she keeps quieter than a woman would."

"Yes, she doesn't talk as much," assented David morosely.

The inexorable Tony did not take the hint. She merely took off her hat and went about appraising David's pictures and statues. "What a pretty sky scene—oh, it was called Sea in October, was it? Well, it was just as nice. And she cocked a tapering chin at a discriminating angle. "Lunch at half-past one, I reckon," she suggested genially.

"Here's your hat," said David. "Why, it's all squashed. Have you been sitting on it?"

"Oh, dear, no; I'm sure I've not sat on it; but it's been on the floor, so I may have stepped on it." Hit or miss she threw on her hat. Then, with the disconcerting abruptness habitual to her, she pounced upon Pickwick and hugged him to her chest.

"We will be back soon," she smiled over her shoulder reassuringly, and went out, carrying Samuel, the folds of whose fat neck rose round his jaw like a choker.

"It annoys me very much, her swooping down on me like this," David growled. And he picked up a pencil and sketched Tony from memory. "She's really enough to get on one's nerves," grumbled he. But when he came to draw the soft sweep of her cheeks, he took to thinking, still holding the pencil.

"Mrs. Bulsome Potter," he called, hearing the landlady's flat foot upon the stair, "come in here. Do you see that Delft vase balancing on my book-case?"

"Yes, sir, I do, and near the edge it is. Often and often I look at it and I wonder how soon it will fall."

"Now doesn't it strike you that two or three dewy, sweet-smelling roses would look well in that Delft vase? I've sometimes thought my dinner-table seemed bare. Procure me some flowers, Mrs. Bulsome Potter."

Every day now and all day Tony interviewed managers. She chased from theater to theater with her notices in an envelope. She hurried half of the time and waited the rest. London was flooded with the first May sunshine, while Tony in subterranean green rooms sat till summoned and tried to keep her gloves clean. She was by no means the only actress to pine outside the manager's office door. The waiting-room was always crammed with laboriously dressed girls, with women and men, old and young, with children even—terrible stage children, crimped like poodles and stunted as jockeys, with playwrights whose manuscripts were even more worn than their faces, with first violinists with dandruff on their velvet collars. And all these folks were as mute as at a burial; motionless, too, except for an occasional twitching of the jaws. They all appeared to be listening, straining to catch some faint, illusive sound; the tense atmosphere of the dentist's parlor prevailed.

About every ten minues a secretary would open the door and call some name. Then one of the mutes would spring up, and having hurriedly gathered together whatever effects he had brought to charm or influence the manager, would pass out of the room, to return, whatever the result of his interview, in a more expansive humor. "What luck?" the others would ask. And always it seemed to Tony came

the inevitable reply, "Full up now; he'll have something for me in the autumn."

"Is he in a good humor?" some one would whisper anxiously. "He was very pleasant to me," was invariably the consequential answer, "but then, of course, I've been with him for years." Once more a rigid silence, while the actors wait as though petrified, mentally reciting, concentrating all their vitality on the coming interview.

Oh, the dreary, dreary waits! The flattering and cringing of these poor sycophants! The gloves benzedine, to charm the manager! All these pitiful effects of the poor! The recitations, the little tricks, so eagerly prepared! The hope and heartache of it! What a pitiable business!

You, the audience, the man who sits in his guinea stall, or his two-dollars-and-a-half orchestra chair, be lenient to the actor. If he has made you laugh, he has worked for it. If he has touched you, be sure he has suffered. Heart-aches go to the making of every part. If you like his work, if you can, clap him, and you give him his self-respect and his bread and butter.

For all her energy, her cheek, her push, her fine notices, Tony could get no work. Let the consciously broad-minded say what they will, Americans are not popular in England. In ultra-fashionable society we have a certain vogue, to be sure, but outside the drawing-room, in business, in journalism, in the arts, in all the wrestles for life, the hand of every Englishman is against us. To the British stage manager our country is a Nazareth that brings forth nothing but melodrama and ranting barn-stormers. Indeed, our plays are too rough, too human perhaps, to appeal to a public educated on high life comedies, and our stage delivery too emphatic when compared with the British school. To give him his due, the English actor is rarely stagey; indeed, he is so natural as to be at times ineffective. Reserve is his motto. But if his reserve hides no latent power, no



emotion, it's worth nothing. Many a London actor hedges behind the "quiet, modern methods," offers them as an excuse for his lack of facial expression, lack of gestures, and all-round histrionic incompetence. We Americans, if too exuberant, are more inspired artists. Nevertheless "the British boards" don't take to us. If, however, an American actor, by some fluke, succeeds in this jealous isle, the islanders who love fair play admit the Yankee can act. To do them justice, they confess it unstintingly, heroically, just as they would have a tooth out.

One afternoon, as Tony, tired and disheartened, was drinking her tea in Lyon's restaurant, she glanced to the far side of the room and, behold, puffing ostentatiously at her cigarette, there lolled Mondragonie. The molting bird still roosted on her head. Bald as a judge, it moldered in a summer nest of artificial Panama. The greeting between the two girls was on Tony's part expansive, wholehearted; on Mondragonie's, sensational, though sincere. They kissed, they laughed, they upset the salt, they threw it over their left shoulders, while Mondragonie, in the vibrant, over-elocuted tones she always assumed when men were about, called down on Tony's head all the blessings in the theatrical decalogue.

"Well, I'm stranded," admitted Tony genially, "high and dry. There's not a manager will have me."

Mondragonie threw up her right hand. A ring flashed on her thumb, another on her first finger. Thus she remained, in a posture enigmatic but interesting.

"Well, I look at it this way," explained Tony. "I can act and I know it. The London managers don't. They're losing a good thing and it's them I'm sorry for. Stop looking in the glass, Old Rip, and tell me how you come to be here."

"I am with Mr. Gluckstein," insinuated Mondragonie

with a pregnant arching of the eyebrows, the actor's feature. "He has a cinematograph palace on Piccadilly."

"Then you're playing for moving pictures?"

"Yes, I act for a new film every week. I shall go down to posterity as I never thought to. I'm in artistic accord with Gluckstein. I worship his brain, though he's a shocking profligate." And Mondragonie swiveled her eye at the ceiling in a conscious fashion.

Now Tony knew well enough what all this flutter of breath and writhing of the underlids signified on Mondragonie's part. It meant "Mr. Gluckstein loves me passionately." But as such exhibitions of temperament were habitual to Mondragonie, who rarely referred without emotion to any absent male, Tony took no heed of these evident signs of erotic disturbance.

"But how," she asked, "did you come to leave Pa Webster?"

"He gave me the boot."

"The boot?"

"Well, the bird, the sack if you prefer," Mondragonie explained; and told the story of her dismissal. It seemed that Pa during Holy Week had produced a miracle play dating from 1100, *The Slaughter of the Innocents*, wherein Mondragonie impersonated Herod's mistress, a character after her own heart. "Well, at my cue, on I went," says Mondragonie, "and there on the stage stood the three kings of Orient, shaking censers at me. We'd had no dress rehearsal. I couldn't expect them to look as they did with their crowns too small and the king in the middle painted black like a minstrel. I just gave one guffaw, and off I went into the wings, tee-heeing. 'It's nerves,' I said to Patsy Groggarty. 'It's *nerve*,' said she. 'Pa's been in front. He wants to see you instantly.' 'That's done it,' thought I. Pa looked at me a while before he spoke. You know how he can. I did feel a worm. 'Miss Mon-

dragonie,'—that's how he began. Hissing mad he was, but I will say for Pa he's always a perfect gentleman.—'Miss Mondragonie, just now you fell short of your duties as an actress. I might in an ordinary play overlook this,'—those were his very words—'but you did worse,' he said, 'in laughing at what is a sacred story, you failed in respect to a right-minded audience. You offended people who had come to see a part of our Bible enacted. I shall not need your services any longer. I give you your fortnight's notice.' That's word for word what he said."

"That was a nasty one for you," Tony sympathized.

"Still, if I hadn't left Pa, I'd never have known Glucky."

"Glucky?"

"Gluckstein, the cinematographer. That reminds me, I must be toddling. I promised to meet Glucky at the Dover sub. He's seeing me home to the Villa Sub Rosa. Always a berth there for you and Pickwick. You've only to say the word."

"Thanks, I'll go with you now, as far as Dover Street."

On the way the girls' talk was of Webster's. "Pa," Mondragonie volunteered, "has introduced a new hand-spring into his reading of Jacques."

"And quite right he should," corroborated Tony, with the fatuous smile all Websterites keep for their Pa. "And how's my dear Granny Firkin?"

Tip-top, it appeared. The whole company had subscribed towards a new cane for Granny Firkin, to be presented on the anniversary of her 60th year of stage work.

"And mind you, Tony, all the characters Granny's played are to be carved round the stick—toppin' idea, eh?"

"Put my name down. How's Mrs. Jack getting on?"

"Sick about that good-for-nothing husband of hers. He's got into trouble with Harris, the manager of the Haymarket."

"And all the others?"

"Same as ever—oh, except Latimer. My word, the swank and bounce of her! Quite the Leading Lady since you've gone. Silk petticoat at rehearsal, mind you—fine silk, noisy silk—why,—Ta-ta, Glucky."

This closing sentence was addressed to an individual in a bedtick waistcoat, whose drooping nose classed him as one of the chosen of the Lord.

"Miss Ethgrete," announced Mondragonie, leading the Israelite forward, "this is Esau Gluckstein, my fiancé."

Miss Ethgrete could only gape, for had the witch of Endor presented herself as affianced, Tony could not have been more astounded.

"We are to be married in June," cried Mondragonie, with the inflections of voice with which she was wont to bring down the curtain, while Gluckstein smiled with all the benignity of the twelve tribes. Tony shook hands blindly, blurting out good wishes, till like a leech Mondragonie fastened on her betrothed and drew him away after her into the subway lift.

Tony was left alone, agog before this revelation of what the human will can accomplish. Could it be? Had Mondragonie all but got herself a husband? Was that indefatigable hunter of men really close on the mort? To be sure, her prey was no longer spry; he was obese, with more than a touch of the Old Testament about him. But what of that? Couldn't he hand her a wedding ring as well as another? And just to think of it—why, he was a manager of sorts!

## CHAPTER XVII

MONDRAGONIE had a sister, Mrs. Blaines, the wife of a Clapham dentist. Mrs. Blaines had five children whose photographs Mondragonie was wont to pass off as those of her own illegitimate offspring. One morning Mr. Blaines left his wife. He eloped with a rich widow after he had filled her teeth, and Mrs. Blaines came back to the home of her girlhood, to the Villa Sub Rosa, all her children walking behind her in Indian file. This was three months ago. And ever since she had shared her alimony with her mother, Mrs. Potts, and kept house for that shocking old toper.

Weekly with Pickwick Tony now visited the Villa Sub Rosa. She would have enjoyed these outings more had her hostess, Mrs. Potts, been of a more stable temperament. It must be confessed that the moods of Miss Mondragonie's mamma altered according to the sips she took from the brown bottle. When in her cups she doted on Tony. "Who is our sweet Hamerican friend?" she would ask, as though she were putting a conundrum. But on her days of abstinence, what a change of heart! "There is a certain *persing*," she would say, looking very hard at Tony, "who shall be nameless, what's a presumchous, harrogant *persing*." No, really, if Mrs. Potts hadn't been so unalterably fond of Pickwick, Tony in self-respect would have had to visit her no more.

At a certain stage of her *ivresse*, Mrs. Potts always insisted on recounting her daughter Ada's marital troubles. She would fix Tony with a portentous eye and begin: "I never could abide 'Enery Blaines. He was the spittin' image of Dr. Crippen."

"Oh, ma!" protested Mrs. Blaines.

"Don't 'Oh, ma!' me. Did he wear a *pinch-naze* or did he not? Had he a blue eye that seemed to say 'Out with that tooth!' and a red *mustache* big enough to scare you?"

"To be sure," conceded Mondragonie, "but such resemblances are superficial."

"Oh, I 'ave got a hargumenting, hundutiful child. Was 'e a doctor in dentistry or was he not? Was 'e a-carryin' on with another female? 'Ad he a bathroom on the second floor where he could 'ave cut up poor Ada as heasy as Crippen carved his un'appy wife? Did Ada 'av her tea of a mornin' in bed and did he wait on her 'isself just like 'ypocritical, 'idjus Crippen? Did Ada sleep o' nights in magic curlers? Tell me that, will you? 'Av you read the papers of the time? Do you know that magic curlers was found among Mrs. Crippen's remains?"

"Oh, lands!" said Mrs. Blaines, looking out of her handkerchief. And the little Blaines wept lustily, alarmed by their grandmother's deep, Wagnerian voice, her trombone-like notes of warning.

"There was some one up there that was a-watchin' over you, Ada," intoned Mrs. Potts, pointing to the ceiling with a finger like a sausage. "There was some one up there that was watchin' over Israel and wasn't sleepin'. Ada, if you wasn't murdered and buried in a cellar, it's by the hinterference of Providence."

He who is richer than his friends meets human nature at its worst. In Tony's world she was a millionaire. Her fortune stirred up all manner of ill-feeling, and in particular evoked the cupidity of Mrs. Potts. This shameless old lady exploited Tony, battened on her, while referring to her as a "money sieve" and by other disrespectful terms. Miss Ethgrete, guileless, deep in her work, proved an easy prey, and whenever Mrs. Potts with a hypocritical snuf-



fling confessed to having overdrawn, Tony paid her bills.

Conscious of possessing a financier at her beck and call, Mrs. Potts engaged in all manner of speculations. She had a bathroom built onto the Villa Sub Rosa. It would serve for plants, she said.

"I doubt if the workmen are remunerated," groaned Mondragonie. "Ma'll bring us to the Old Bailey," whimpered Mrs. Blaines. But Tony had a horrid inkling of how Mrs. Potts intended to pay for the bathroom, nor was she wrong; for the very day the hot water pipe was laid, Mrs. Potts crossed her arms and declared she was ready to give herself up to justice. At this sensational announcement her daughters rushed to her side, her grandchildren clung to her, while Tony, who happened to be at the Villa Sub Rosa, reached her at one bound.

"'Appy are the rich," said Mrs. Potts, holding a handkerchief before her guilty face. "Like the little birds, they can always get a bath." And she rolled her vinous eye up over the handkerchief and fixed it on Tony.

Tony flinched. She understood. Inwardly she rebelled. What, must she be a considerable sum out of pocket just to gratify this sly old fraud? But before the evident distress of Mondragonie and Mrs. Blaines, who, to do them justice, knew nothing of their mother's schemes, Tony settled the bill, and wisely offered the bathroom as a present—her last present, be it understood, for quite a time to come. For she knew that nothing estranges friends like an I. O. U.

As for Mrs. Potts, she expressed not the least gratitude, but invariably reproved Tony when the hot water ran cold, and referred to the bathroom as a useless luxury, saddled on a humble, honest widow, herself.

Since her betrothal, Mondragonie spent most of her time in the back parlor with Mr. Gluckstein. Since she had

found favor in his eyes, her shirt-waists had bloomed into a floraison of beads, *bricloques*, jade elephants, coral monkeys, and charms against the Evil Eye. The sly puss! when her only aim in sporting all this bric-à-brac was to attract any eye, however evil.

"Miss Hem's settin' with her gentleman," Mrs. Potts would confide to Tony when the latter visited the Villa Sub Rosa. Miss Mondragonie's Christian name was unquestionably plebeian, for she never revealed it. Her family called her "Miss M." or "Miss Hem" rather. "'Er 'ead is on his chest. 'Is nose is in 'er 'air. She 'asn't moved for an hour. The wonder is she 'asn't a cramp. Well, well—she's 'appy; and her *pore* old mother can set down and hexpire." At heart the old fraud was delighted at the prospect of being rid of Mondragonie, of whose culture she stood in awe. And now, as she snuffled in her pocket handkerchief, a neglected rosette swinging from her cap, she promised herself, once her younger daughter was gone, to tyrannize over Mrs. Blaines, terrorize the children, and take entire possession of the bathroom.

So in the stuffy front parlor, to the wheezing of the gas stove, Tony and Mrs. Potts discussed the coming marriage in that gabbling, gushing whisper in which women talk of love. Mr. Gluckstein's exalted appreciation of art won Tony. Like all his race, he reveled in color, in line, in harmony. He exulted in all the forms of genius. If the Jews were exterminated, the fine arts would be lost, the theater waste away, for the Israelite, with his cultivated esthetic sense, makes the backbone of the drama. It was Mr. Gluckstein's familiarity with the master painters that taught him to see in Mondragonie's long, bleached features the degenerate grace of a Botticelli, the lantern-jawed grace of a Burne-Jones.

"He says I remind him of the girl in the Song of Solomon—the girl it's dedicated to. Isn't it sweet of him?

I must get it." But Tony, not having Mr. Gluckstein's exotic taste, and remembering that the lady in question had eyes like fish-pools, a nose looking towards Damascus, and other attributes which, if utilitarian, were not attractive sounding, thought in her heart that her friend had no reason to feel so flattered.

Tony in her perigrinations between the London theaters often passed her friend the crossing-sweeper and never failed to interchange with him a few compliments. She admired his crossing, he asked after her career. Oh, she'd get whatever she'd set out for to get, he guaranteed. He knew women. He hadn't watched them among the traffic for twenty years for nothing. He condoned with Miss Ethgrete for being out of work and gracefully predicted that a day would come when he should see her name in capitals on the chests and on the backs of sandwich men.

David Hearn, unlike the crossing-sweeper, was not in sympathy with Tony's ambitions. Of late he had grown bitterer against the theater. He acted almost as though he owed the stage a grudge. When night after night Tony, sitting down to dinner, said, "Well, it'll be to-morrow that I'll find work," David reviled the profession. He had, however, little time to give to the affairs of others. His own work, the memorial statue to the crew of the Titanic, held him in a vise. Under his feverish hands the clay had taken form, and now he passed most of the day at his workshop in Full Moon Street, supervising his workmen, who were already cutting the stone. So Tony only saw David at odd moments when he was both detestable and dangerously charming. A nervous, hectic ambition was the keynote of his character. He was greedy for fame, for knowledge above all. He wasn't so much jealous of every celebrity as envious of every one who knew more than he did.

Work with Hearn was an opiate, a drug. Whether he had chisel, paint-brush, or pencil in hand, always he seemed straining to daze his mind, to wear himself out, to use up his brain. Work was his brandy, his morphia. He had taken to it as a man takes to dissipation; and indeed, incessant work, indulged in frantically, is a form of dissipation, not to say a vice. A confirmed opium smoker could not have been more unbalanced, fantastic than was David. And for the present it was Tony who bore the brunt of his moods. She was his mental sick nurse as it were. He sucked her life, her spirits; turned to her however his temper veered; made use of her as an outlet to his black humor. With the egoism characteristic of sick children and artists, Hearn grew to feel that to cheer him when he was down, to settle his every grievance, and to hear him out when he was cross, was Tony's business in life.

But what Tony could not habituate herself to were David's bewildering moods, his moments of wild exhilaration or flat despair. He was a different man by the hour. At twelve of the clock, we will say, a genius—or so he said; at one, presto change, he declared himself a charlatan who had fooled the world, a fake artist, a man who ought to have been a carpenter, a locksmith, not a sculptor.

"Look at that hunk of stone," he would protest, pointing with tears of disgust at the very statue he had been fawning over some sixty minutes earlier. "Do you call that exuberance a muscle?" he would ask reproachfully of Tony, just as though she it was who had held the chisel. "Do you call that a foot?"

"Why, yes, of course—at least, don't you mean it to be?"

David terrorized her with a look, dashed at the table, tore open the drawer, and scattered the contents of a portfolio.

"Here are some sketches of Rodin's and Macmonnies' and Saint-Gaudens'. Here's form, composition, anatomy for you."

"They are very pretty pictures, I'm sure. Dear me, yes," Tony admits soothingly.

"Ah ha! you know a good thing when you see it, I see. You don't always ring so true when you praise my work." And David makes a turbulent exit, goes out slamming the door.

No, there was no doubt about it, David could be very annoying. "Tony, you have no tact," he once said, "and no sense of humor."

"Oh, come now," Tony protested, "why, I'm terribly funny at times. Often and often I make people laugh, and I don't even know why."

"Well," confessed David, "you are quaint, and the most old-fashioned——"

"I—old-fashioned! Oh, David! I, a vegetarian—I who almost killed my father with shame—ah, well, my family don't think me old-fashioned at any rate."

"You're all heart and no head, my poor girl. You're as alive with exuberant old-fashioned virtues as a rubber ball is with bounce."

One might wonder why Tony cared to be with such a morose bear. But besides his having views in common with hers on matrimony, he—well, she liked him. And to keep a friendship firm, one only of the two friends needs a lovely disposition.

In the interims of hammering at the managers, Tony walked with Felton through St. James's Park, or the Row. And it was always of "the profession" they talked.

"Don't you think, Mr. Felton," Tony would ask, "it was scandalous of Jessica—Shylock's daughter, you know—to sell her dead mother's turquoise engagement ring for

a monkey? I've never heard of such a thing." And much more on this strain, illustrated by dramatic byplay, spirited gestures, and much windmill rotation of the arms. The passersby turned to smile at this eager and unconscious orator, whose hat flopped with every buoyant step she took. In compliment to the spring, Tony had laid aside her somewhat moth-eaten Tam o' Shanter and now sported a white linen *béret*, perilously resembling a cook's cap and which she intrusted to her head without a hatpin.

"And, oh," Tony said once, out walking, "I never thought Ophelia sang nice songs when she went crazy." Whereat Felton looked down at her with his kind, near-sighted eyes, and gave the sudden surprised laugh of the man who smiles rarely. Then he walked on with his head, as always, slightly bent. His desk had deformed him a little. He held one shoulder higher than the other through eternally writing.

Yes, these two friends talked together as only professional and old-fashioned folk talk nowadays, of dramatic masterpieces and the heroines of Shakespeare. For them Imogen, Juliet, all the tender fancies of the poet, revived and lived again. Beatrice went before them through Park Lane, laughing, the buoyant, bitter woman; and Rosalind leapt on as through the forest of Arden; and Viola, the dearest of creatures, waited on love in a strange country.



## CHAPTER XVIII

FELTON had given Tony a line of introduction to a famous manager, a Mr. Cready, and she, having massaged her skirt and jacket with the clothes brush, presented herself and her letter at King George's Theater, Shaftesbury Avenue. Her note was taken from her and she was left a-twitter in the green room. "Mr. Cready will see you," conceded the secretary, opening a door.

Mr. Cready was disclosed, hunched over a desk, sucking at a dead Havana. "Come in," he shouted, and the stump wagged between his lips.

Tony took a deep breath, then marched up to him. He did not rise nor offer her a chair, but grinding his cigar end between his teeth, stared at her suspiciously, just as a dog might over a bone.

"I have very good references. No—that's what cooks say. Notices, I mean. I really have," ventures Tony, with an ingratiating smile. And she began to feel in her pockets.

"Notices—never look at them; put them in the fire." And Mr. Cready shied the cigar stump into the waste paper basket. "What's your name and what have you done?" And he flung back his head, showing the flaring nostrils of his brutal, trumpet-shaped nose.

Tony felt suddenly shy, but braced herself and started in to recite her stage history. All the time she was speaking she could feel the manager's appraising eye running up and down her, just as a cattleman at market might study a cow.

"You're not tall," he objected, interrupting her.

"No, not uncommonly," Tony conceded. "But, lud, it's

marvelous what heels will do," and she reared up on her toes.

"What salary?"

Tony could never discuss money matters without blushing. "Well, I have to live," apologized she.

The manager screwed up his small, satirical eyes. "How much do you ask to live on?"

And Tony confessed that eight pounds a week would come in very handy—very handy indeed.

"Gently, gently. As the funds are now, I wouldn't give eight pounds for a show girl, not for a six-footer."

Tony was discomfited. "Do you pay by inches?" she asked.

Startled, he reared up his head. "Eh, what?" he snarled, and met the gaze of her wide, limpid eyes innocently beaming upon him. "Looks a good sort," he thought, "but not my style."

"What's your line of work?" he asked for form's sake. And while pretending to write down her answer, he scribbled hieroglyphs on a sheet of paper.

"I'm mostly cast for comedy, Mr. Cready, because I've got a funny face."

"Farce, low comedy?"

"Sometimes. But I'm best at emotional work, Mr. Cready—regular tantrums."

The manager pursed his lips and made a clucking noise, suggestive of incredulity.

"Ah," urged Tony, deadly earnest, "it's my features mislead you, Mr. Cready."

The manager's brutal eye gauged her possibilities. "I don't see you in neurotic work," was his verdict. "You're no heavy actress."

"Mr. Cready, if my nose were an inch longer—well, half an inch, we'll say—I should be a second Mrs. Pat Campbell by now."

"Well, well, Miss—ahem! Evergreen, I've nothing for you now. If anything turns up, I'll drop you a line."

"But you don't know my name nor where I live," sang out the wide-awake Tony.

"Just so—*eggzactly*. Where shall I write?" And Cready made a pretense of jotting down Tony's address.—Take up your pen and spell out his name—that's the only way to be rid of an actor, was a saying of Cready's. Experience must have taught him these gentle tactics, for he was naturally not nice in his choice of methods, and had a hob-nailed boot proved more effective as a means of ejection, he would unquestionably have made use of it.

"And now," said Tony, "before I go I must and will recite to you."

Cready winced with irritation.

"Recitations cut no ice with me—I bar recitations."

Tony was not abashed. "If you won't listen to me, how can you judge what I'm worth? No, no, Mr. Cready. I owe it to myself to recite, and recite I will.

"'It was in Persia at the feast——'"

Cready sprang up, every nerve in his wiry little body tense. "I'm short for time," he signaled in a warning voice.

"Well, I'll skip the first part. I'll start at the most interesting bit:

"'Take the goods——'"

Cready's fist came down on his hand-bell with a sharp blow and the secretary stood in the room as by magic.

"Show this lady out," said the manager. And he sat down, fuming with danger, like a lighted fuse.

Now Tony was nothing if not determined. She seized hold of the desk with both hands and went on declaiming:

"'Take the goods——'"

"Take yourself off.—Take her away," bawls Mr. Cready. But Tony outbellowed him.

" 'Take the goods the gods provide thee,  
Lovely Thaïs sits beside thee.' "

And now all of a sudden the manager's manner veered about, turned suave, persuasive, and delicately satirical. "She can say the rest in Shaftesbury Avenue," he told his secretary in a purring voice, and jerked his thumb in Tony's direction.

Now to be thrust bodily out of doors when in a fine dramatic frenzy might disconcert some artists. Tony, however, once she had started to recite, was like a lion who has tasted blood.

"I'll show I can act," she vowed to herself. And when the secretary's hand closed on her arm, she took a firmer grip of the desk and burst neatly into tears, went off, in fact, into a convincing fit of hysterics. "I want to be under your management, Mr. Cready," sobbed Tony. "I want to be leading lady," wailed she, rolling up her eyes as though striving to look into the crown of her hat.

The secretary was unmanned and let go his hold of her arm. But Cready, who was made of sterner stuff, cried out: "Leading lady! Oh, yes, I dare say. And every night Friday—pay night, I suppose. Anything else to oblige you?" And the manager went white in a spasm of exasperation.

Tony hurried her sobs. "How can you be so disagreeable, Mr. Cready? Just see how I'm crying." And lowering her handkerchief, she disclosed two round gray eyes, dewy with tears, looking out over a very pink nose. Mr. Cready was not impressed, though abashed somewhat by this wet, unwinning stare.

Since the long-drawn look of mute reproach proved unavailing, the ingenious Tony gave vent to a more spirited

form of grief. She tossed up her chin and emitted ear-piercing shrieks, while pumping from each eye a deluge of tears.

The man who can look with indifference on a weeping woman, especially on an attractive, weeping young girl, is either more or less than a man. Certainly Cready was affected, though not with pity. "Take her away and muzzle her," the manager hissed. She can be heard all over the building—God, what lungs! Here, give her something to drink." And Cready went ferreting in a cupboard for some brandy, to his taste a universal panacea. "There, swallow that," the manager tried to coo, as he held out the tumbler. "There's a good girl." But for all his syrupy voice, he glared at her the while as though he meant to bite her.

And now, on the very top note of hysterics, Tony, inwardly congratulating herself, ceased screaming, and smiling at Mr. Cready across the brandy, asked, "Am I, or am I not an emotional actress?" and blandly blew her nose. Indeed, she had worked herself into the frenzy peculiar to dervishes and *pros*, when tears flow at command, when the body is racked with self-suggested passions. It was short range work, this playing a hysterical scene jowl to jowl with a manager, and Tony could not help but feel that she had achieved a histrionic feat.

Mr. Cready, however, did not congratulate her. Without a word he turned his back on her and slammed the tumbler of brandy down on the table. Over the top of his collar his sinewy neck showed glowing red. Without moving, "Inform this young lady," he told the secretary, in a low, seething voice, "that I will not trouble her with any more interviews."

The manager never showed his face to Tony again that day. Three strides of his fierce little legs took him out of the room, the baize door swung to on a back as omnipotent, as decisive, as that of the recording angel!

"That's done it," said Tony, holding her damp handkerchief in both hands.

"Yes, you've played the fool," agreed the secretary in a whisper. "He's never so nasty as when he turns polite like that."

"Well, after all, it was I drove him from the room; not he me." A barren victory, but Tony drew some cold comfort from it all the same.

Outside in the street, she felt indescribably forlorn, lost. She sat down on somebody's doorstep and pondered. The passersby in Shaftesbury Avenue stared at her. The owners of the shop came to look at her. But she thought on, unconscious of them all—a plump sphinx. After all, this conquering the world is a complicated business. What you mostly need, according to Danton, is audacity. But cheek won't do it all, concluded Tony.

On her return home she found waiting for her a letter from—yes, there was no mistaking the patrician penmanship—a letter from her father,—the first she had received since she had left America. Her heart thumped as she tore open the envelope.

Mr. Meredith's epistle was composed in a stilted style, the style of those who feel they must ultimately become famous, and his name was signed with flourishes, like one who knows his autograph to be of value. His mode of composition reminded his daughter of the methods of that admirable woman, Madame de Sévigné, whose portrait in a turban she had so often admired, and who, in Tony's school days, had been held up to her as the model of letter writers. "My pen is running away with me," says Madame de Sévigné, "Oh, naughty, naughty pen," etc.. And Oscar composed in the same playful vein. The subject in hand he approached with infinite precaution and circumlocutions. Why had he written? He generously gave Tony ten guesses. Did she suppose this? Did she suppose that? No, she was



wrong—try again, etc. In the last paragraph out came the cat from the bag. Oscar had momentarily laid aside the dignity of a parent, because to be frank with Tony he stood in dire necessity. Had she observed those exquisite Alpine hats of a semi-plush composition and of a deep corn-flower blue—lovely things! and only to be acquired of Messrs. Scotts at the corner of Piccadilly and Bond Street

Although a testimonial to Oscar's monstrous vanity, Tony treasured this epistle. It seemed to promise what she longed for—a reconciliation, for, shocking snob as Mr. Meredith had always proved himself, she could not forget he was her father. She now wrote to him regularly, telling him of her work, her hopes, her disappointments, but except for his cry of admiration, a cry from the heart, evoked on receipt of the Alpine hat, Mr. Meredith preserved an offended silence.

Sometimes of a Sunday Tony and David, to escape the sordid sadness of the London Sabbath, traveled out to Richmond or Kew Gardens. The English summer was coming on, with thrushes and clover. With every outing the young people let the train go further, deeper into the country. Each time they visited some remoter village, some more sylvan sweetness, where the cockney never comes, where Sunday bells are ringing. David and Tony would cross the fields together and the churchgoers passing took them for lovers. Away behind like a porpoise leaping through the waves, Pickwick came lolloping through the long grass, while a crowd of yellow butterflies rose impudently before his *retroussé* nose.

Later, Tony and David drank tea, the crude, the twangy tea of England, and Pickwick ate, while the sun went down, furling itself in flames. From blue to purple bloomed the night, and the friends turned back toward the railway station. The young man would take the girl's hand, for

in the dark strange ground is apt to be treacherous. It was then that David held forth on astrology: that red, that gory star, the first of the galaxy, was Mars; this group so fiery that you grew dizzy in contemplation, the Pleiades. The two would walk with their chins in the air till Pickwick, curious, looked skyward, sniffing the breeze. There, low in the horizon hung Venus, the star of the lovers, capricious, enchanting. And then their talk was all of love.

"You and I have proved, Tony," quoth David, "that for all this psalmoding of love that goes on, a friendship is possible between a man and a woman." And David pressed Tony's hand enthusiastically as they passed into the mysterious shadow of an elm. "A friendship without a touch of sentimentality." And he looked down at her through the drifting moonlight. "What a bear you must have thought me one day when I told you you could never attract me; though I repeat, you never could. What a consequential bear!"

"I remember I was rather pleased," declared Tony, without the least effort at sarcasm, "for although I couldn't possibly fall in love with you, David, and though nothing on earth could induce me to marry you, or any one else, nevertheless, if you hadn't been so outspoken, I suppose I should have had to try and fascinate you. It's an effort every woman feels she must make—it's instinctive."

"Do you know, Tony," conceded David, "I can imagine your proving quite—what shall I say?—magnetic to some people."

"And I'm sure you yourself must have attracted a great many women, David," answered Tony politely. "By the way, what type of woman appeals to you?"

"Type—I can't classify what draws me to a woman. From the first she seems faintly familiar, all-suffusing, disturbing—other words for feminine, I suppose——"

"Oh, yes, I know; the clinging kind, like Scott's heroines."

"Tony, see: hold your hand in this shaft of light—here, between the branches. Your hand looks like frost that has a flame inside. Some women have for me just the same chilly, fantastic charm."

"Dear me," exclaimed Tony, impressed, "do you meet many of them?"

"Sometimes yes; sometimes none. At times months go by and I don't feel there's a face on earth that could please me. And then one morning I wake to believe that Beauty is moving towards me from somewhere to meet me again, and sure enough she brushes by me in the street perhaps. I know her from a distance by her step or the turn of her head. More generally she's a woman that no effort of mine could ever bring near me, or else, if she's some one I could speak to, she kills the enchantment herself by a note in her voice or the set of her teeth."

"Well, it all sounds very worrying to me. Personally, myself, I never regret being heart-whole."

"And I esteem you for it—I really do," cried David, carried away by the fervor of his friendship. And he clasped Tony's hands in both his, while the moonlight, sifting through the branches, spangled their shoulders. "You're the first girl I've ever known whose sole aim, whose supreme ambition, wasn't to get herself comfortably married."

"My poor David! you don't know women at all."

"Ha, ha!"—and he dropped her hands like two hot coals—"I don't, do I? Oh, no. Ho, ho!"

"I knew that would make you angry. At least you don't know American women."

"Pshaw! don't tell me that the average American girl isn't straining every nerve to get herself a husband."

“She’s not. She’d very often rather be without one. And yet, David, bear in mind that the nicest husbands are found in America.”

“Oh, yes, of course, to be sure they are!” jibed Hearn, turning nasty.

## CHAPTER XIX

EACH night, after scouring London, kicking her heels at any stage door and assuring every manager that she, Miss Ethgrete, was that manager's ideal, Tony would say, "Patience, and shuffle the cards." But her cards were few and Felton her only trump. That indefatigable friend never ceased to have her interest at heart and finally one morning, when the future was looming black for Tony, he brought her good news—work, at last. It was only a charity *matinée*, to be sure, but it would serve to give her a start in London—to get her on her stage legs. The play was by one of the greatest men of the time. Tony must go instantly and read the part on approval.

"But supposing I don't please him?" suggested Miss Ethgrete, who was beginning to learn something of life.

"We must bully him into engaging you. An author is not like a manager. One has the subjective, the other the objective mind. Come." So Tony put on her best hat and came.

The playwright, looking positively diseased with intelligence, shook hands across his desk, and in a weak voice, like the squeakings of a mouse in a cheese, "I shall give you to read a very sanguinary scene," said he, then crouched attentive.

Tony, trembling very much, read according to her lights. When she finished, the author admitted that her rendering of the rôle was good, but that in person she was hardly voluptuous enough to represent the *Aspasia* of his dreams. Both Felton and his protégée pooh-poohed the objection, and the playwright weakly engaged Tony.

When Tony came home, to confide her good fortune to David, she realized, the instant she saw him scowl up at her across his worktable, she had chosen the wrong moment.

"Whatever's the matter?"

"These," he growled, shaking a sheaf of newspaper cuttings.

"The First Kiss in Eden?"

The First Kiss in Eden was one of David's statues that had just been exposed at the Grafton gallery.

"Thank God for a sense of humor," roared David, looking as though he had never smiled. "These imbecilities are amusing in their way—yes, really funny. Listen to this: 'A fine piece of work technically, but as one studies it one feels What's the good of it? How can it help any one?' There you have the critic utilitarian. He wants out of every work of art to make a moral profit, to draw some general usefulness, champion some cause, silly ass. A spittoon is more serviceable than the Laocoön; yet I prefer the latter."

"My! that notice in your other hand is two columns long. It shows that The First Kiss has made a stir anyhow."

"Yes, all abuse. Just listen to this—it's delicious: This gentleman's modesty is really affecting. He's a perfect lily. This is the critic virginal. It seems he doesn't dare to go to see my work accompanied by a respectable woman. He doesn't say whether he's more daring with the not respectable women. Here's a bit for you: 'Things are indeed come to a pretty pass when a man must make a preliminary visit to a gallery before he venture to bring his——' oh, an interminable list of female relatives, sister, mother, grandmother, cousin,—nauseating, isn't it? Have I ever pretended The First Kiss in Eden was fit for a Sunday school? Am I qualifying for the League of Purity?"



Indeed, for a man who advertised his contempt for the critics, who referred to fame as ephemeral and life as a bubble, David took his bad notices very much to heart. This same inconsistency may be noticed in many artists.

The artist who perhaps suffers the most through his art is the actor. The poet can dream away at his verse and mold it to his heart's content; the novelist creates his personæ and breathes into them the individuality he will; the dramatist, the sculptor, the composer—all are free to follow their imagination, to listen for the capricious dictates of inspiration. Not so the player. He is often uncongenially cast, generally made to play his part on some predecessor's lines, always badgered by his producer. Only the actor manager, that monarch of his kind, can give a performance after his own heart, and even then he is at the mercy of some critic with a preconceived conception of the rôle.

Never was there such an unsatisfactory business as this acting. And yet, account for it as you can, no life more enthralling. The man who has made up his face and bowed before the footlights is never the same again. The poison is in his blood. "It's a dog's life," says the actor; but failures, love, age, legacies—nothing, will wean him from the grease paint.

As he watched Tony rehearse, the playwright grew more resigned to his choice. But Cready, who was producing the play—the very same Cready on whom Miss Ethgrete had tried her histrionic *tour de force*—so domineered over the gentle dramatist that after the first few rehearsals he crept away. The impeccable business man ousted the creative artist. Nor did Tony ever see the playwright again, for he was of so modest and sensitive a temperament that when a play of his was produced in London he invariably fled to the Continent.

A week later—charity matinées are but insufficiently re-

hearsed—when Tony made her London début, she saw in the auditorium something glittering here and there like the scales of a serpent. These sparks were the opera glasses of the public, twinkling at her critically.

Because of her simplicity, because of the native pathos of her, Tony after her first speeches heard the sound dearest to the emotional actress—the sound of the blowing of noses. The pit, the gallery, the ostentatious stalls who had come to yawn and show off, gave her, when she made her exit, such a clap as pays an actor for years of drudgery, while Cready grabbed her by both hands. “Good,” he said, “damned good.” And close to his eye shone something that might have been sweat or a tear.

Not only is the road to art long, it is rough. To wait a-tremble in the dentist’s parlor is a child’s sensation compared to the tortured expectancy of the actor when, after a first night, he turns the leaves of the morning paper. The damp odor of the fresh print oppresses him, while his fearful eye, hurrying down the column, reads his printed name defamed or glorified. Through nerves, ambition, and vanity the actor is a constant prey to suffering. His anguish, like that of Tantalus, is ever renewed, never appeased. Beneficent Nature, who has endowed the rhinoceros with a hide and habituated the eel to the operation of skinning, forgets to toughen the artist.

When Tony, ever eager to learn through criticism, had read the paragraphs that applied to her work of the afternoon before, she was not a whit the wiser, and no wonder. The *Daily Telegraph* declared that rarely had a more finished performance been seen on the London stage. Miss Ethgrete’s methods, stated the critic, reminded one of the French. Her technique was at her fingers’ ends; her voice winning as the siren’s, but oh, regrettable, the natural gifts of the emotional actress were not hers—gifts, alas, that no knowledge of the stage, no intellectual qualities can replace.

The *Times*, after deploring the amateur quality of Miss Ethgrete's rendering of her rôle, her faulty elocution, her careless reading of the lines, her frequently incorrect intonations, and the seven or eight false stage turns she had made, flamed in its concluding paragraph into a panegyric to the effect "that this young actress, who has as yet had apparently no experience and acquired none of the technique that marks the professional from the amateur, nevertheless possesses such extraordinary natural powers, such marvelous emotional magnetism, that yesterday afternoon she held the house spellbound. In her passion she was sublime, in her pathos infinitely reserved, infinitely simple and heart-rending."

"What is truth? asked jesting Pilate," David quoted.

"Well, a pudding's in the eating," Tony assured, "and we had six curtains and the dear old gallery cried, and so did the pit, and even the stalls had a snivel or two."

Now the pit and the gallery are the actor's friends, his darlings. He respects the boxes, the dress circle, and the orchestra chairs, but he does not love them. When a sincere cry of grief, of passion, of despair is rung from him, he cries out not so much to those bare shoulders and dress clothes close to him on the other side of the footlights, but to the humanity in cheaper seats, to the nut-cracking gods. A current of feeling flows from him to them, from them to him, human, strong, and simple. He makes them cry, and their tears make him.

Cready sent for Tony a day or so later. When she entered his office he even offered her a chair.

"I and the directors of the King George," he told her, "have decided to give you the lead in our next production, *The Prettier Sister*."

"What is the salary?" asked Tony, struggling not to look happy, for she had toughened into something of a business woman.

"What do you want?"

"Forty pounds a week."

"Ah, well, I and the directors have concluded not to wrangle over a few pounds——"

"But why? My work hasn't changed since the day you decided I wasn't worth eight pounds."

"Come, come, Miss Ethgrete, I never questioned your worth. What I said was we couldn't afford to pay the price."

"And now you find you can?"

"Well, Miss Ethgrete, I'll be straight with you——"

"I take that for granted, Mr. Cready."

"*Eggzactly*. I'm no good at beating round the bush. Since this charity *matinée* your market value has gone up—gone up considerably."

"Ah, I made good in the part, didn't I?"

"Yes, yes; but that has nothing to do with my engaging you. No, what's helped you is that your *matinée* was under the patronage of the Duchess of Crowsfoot."

"But why? How does all this high life tommyrot prove I can act?"

"Good Lord! One can see with half an eye that you're a novice to the boards," and Cready threw back his head, exposing his sturdy throat, and laughed brutally, the cigar stump wagging between his lips "Do you suppose you must be able to act to get a theatrical offer? No, you're far from the mark. It's notoriety does it. You've got to be talked about. The next best thing to a divorce scandal for booming an actress is a little tiff with the law, provided the actress comes out top dog. Or, she can make herself, as you have, by getting the nobility to push her. The only pity is you didn't have a little chat on the stage with the Duchess. Nothing booms an actress like handing out a bit of sauce to royalty."

So Tony signed her contract. Now she was a London

star. And her fame,—perhaps notoriety is the better word, since an actress's reputation is never clean from a certain tawdry taint—grew with each day. Fashionable milliners asked her to be photographed in their hats. From confectioners' windows her own face smiled out at her like a Zozodont advertisement, showing every tooth, on the lid of a candy box. She continued quite unelated, however—too modest, in fact. She hardly made capital enough professionally, and certainly not pecuniarily, from the world's growing familiarity with her name. She was utterly without that pilot to success, the genius of self-advertisement.

A chemist having offered to name a perfume after her, on receipt from her of a signed letter praising his pills for seasickness above all others, Tony made answer very politely, for fear of hurting his feelings, that while she felt sure his pills were as nice as any pills could be, nevertheless she was so ignorant of their ingredients that she felt herself in no position to aver that his Pearls of the Sea were better than another's.

Such over-scrupulousness held her back rather, since unfortunately more than the artistic temperament goes to the making of an actress.

## CHAPTER XX

ONE June afternoon, as Tony was crossing through Piccadilly towards the Strand, a young man threaded his way past her, through the crowd. His conscious glide was familiar. She took a brisk canter and came abreast of him.

"Eglantine!" said she. "Old Egg!" And they shook hands earnestly, for actors who have played in the same company and shared the hardships of a tour, always meet with emotion, as might two travelers once shipwrecked together.

"I saw in *The Stage* that you'd come in for a good thing," Eglantine said. And as they walked, they held each other by the arm in a way peculiar only to schoolgirls and *pros*. "A lead with Cready isn't picked up every day," he added, as they turned into Hyde Park. "You always were lucky." He spoke the word "lucky" almost obsequiously, bowing before the fetish that makes and unmakes a theatrical career.

Tony settled herself on a bench and sat swinging her sturdy little feet in their stout walking boots. "How is it you're in town, Egg?" she asked, beaming with the warmth of good-fellowship.

As Eglantine placed himself beside her, he drew the tails of his frock coat over his knees. "I have left Webster's," he answered guardedly.

"Settled for the winter—got a good job?"

He made a gesture that swept the horizon. "I must look about me," he said, and his small face peered out rather anxiously, Tony thought, over an aggressively high collar—



a somewhat grubby collar, too, worn no doubt through many interviews to subjugate the managers. The vertical lines from which no actor is free seemed to have deepened in Eglantine's face. His too-roseate loveliness was fading. He looked like a peevish girl who had grown a second pair of eyebrows on her upper lip. But for all this, Tony smiled at him with affection, for to her he impersonated Webster's company.

How was it with dear Pa? she asked—with Patsy Grogarty, and Granny Firkin? What news of Jonesey, of Louisa Frou-Frou, or Mrs. Jack?

Pa, according to Eglantine, was in fine feather. He was training his company for a pageant, and every member of the troupe, with the exception of Granny Firkin, was learning to ride—not that Granny Firkin seemed older, not a minute. The day of her final benefit was as far off as ever. As for Patsy Grogarty, she was still the memory of the company and its thunder in the prompt corner. Jonesey and Louisa Frou-Frou were, as always, fixtures in the chorus. Only Mrs. Jack had left, taking with her her sons, Ham and Ham, Junior. "She's come to London; she's wardrobe mistress at the Haymarket."

"Wardrobe mistress?" cried Tony, shocked. "Whatever did she leave Webster's for to turn wardrobe mistress?"

"She couldn't get anything better. She was mad to come to town. Her husband was in a scrape. She wanted to be near him to pilot him through."

"Poor woman!" said Tony.

"Why poor? She can't act," Eglantine stated, with professional brutality. "She'd be jolly lucky to get a dresser's job, and she'll come to it yet, you'll see. I'm sorry for her, of course, but, after all, our profession isn't a charity bureau." And Eglantine's features seemed to shrivel like those of an acidulous old maid.

"And Ruth Latimer?" asked Tony.

"Since you went, she's top dog again. Why, if she was starved she couldn't be swankier. It's because of her I left. She worked on Pa till he billed her name prior to mine on the posters, and in bigger print, too, mind you. Well, I'm not proud, but I have my self-respect, so I waited till Webster had need of me, and on the first night of Hippolytus, I threw my contract at him and walked out of the theater." The young man, with anemic nostrils distended, flung out his arm as though casting down a challenge. Something went wrong with his cuff. It shot down over his hand, free of its moorings. Somehow this little mishap seemed to humanize him. He ceased to pose as the high-spirited juvenile. When he next spoke, it was no longer with the voice of Harry Hotspur, but with his own, with that of a boy tired, hungry, out of money, and out of work. "I haven't got on since," he confessed, hiding the cuff up his sleeve. "I put it down to a bit of jade I lost. My luck's gone ever since." And his mouth began to curve down like an inverted crescent.

"Buck up," whispered Tony in the phraseology of the stage, her hand on his shoulder, as though he were another girl.

Viciously he turned on her. "Oh, it's easy enough for you to say 'Buck up'!"

"Why, Egg, I stormed every manager five times over before I got work."

"I could storm too, on three meals a day, but I'm stony broke. There! Dear God, it's bitter, bitter, to know you have it all here"—and he thumped his chest—"and never to get a show. If I was only a painter, if I was only a poet, I could do my work, and when I was starved the world would know what it had murdered. But how can I act if no one engages me?" And he flung her hand petulantly from his shoulder, turning away his face. The

instant after she felt the bench shake and knew he was sobbing.

A mist thin as a veil, warm as sweat, drenched the hollows of Hyde Park; the borders of rhododendron, prematurely matured, drooped overripe, and nothing could be more pitiful than Eglantine, dressed to attract the eye, gasping his grief out on this public bench, in this common pleasure-ground, already impregnated with the autumnal decay.

"If you had married me," he sobbed, "I shouldn't be in this hole."

With an invigorating smile, "Now see here," volunteered Tony, "to-morrow at King George's Theater Cready holds a competitive reading of the part of Conrad, the juvenile lead."—These competitive readings are a practice with some managers; tens of actors impersonate the same rôle at sight, and the most competent performer is chosen.—"I will ask Cready to let you have a run through with the others."

"I should never make good—my nerve's gone."

"You don't want your nerve for Conrad. He has hysterics off and on through the three acts."

Hunched up, poor crumpled lump of discouragement, Eglantine sobbed on, weeping all the tears in his body on to his Prince Albert tie.

"He wants some dinner," thought Tony, whose psychology, for all that she was an artist, was of the simplest. "Come," encouraged she, "have a peck with me at Lyon's."

But he waved her from him, Hippolytus warding off the attentions of Phædra. "Conrad plays for pathos. Does he cry?"

"Bucketfuls."

"Well, then; no, thank you, I won't eat anything. I cry so much more easily when I'm hungry." And, with a disconcerting abruptness, he sprang up, looking composed, alert, almost spruce again, resuscitated out of his tears.

"God bless you," he murmured, crushing her hand in both his. Tony, embarrassed by this effusion, glanced down her nose and smiled shyly.

He left her, his hat in his hand, his hair blown about him like an aureole. "To-morrow!" he cried over his shoulder. His glance swept the trees in their ranks, the file of benches, the waste-paper boxes, as though challenging applause, and Eglantine made his exit, went off, as it were, in an emotional eclipse.

Operatic gestures, voice on the tremolo, and yet he was sincere. Tony knew it. He was touched by her thought of him, a-quiver for his future. He expressed himself as he best could. Was it his fault if he spoke with a voice that had been trained to be heard from afar or gesticulated as he had studied? Enigmatical folk, these actors. Who shall say their variable moods, their contradictory passions are not genuine? Moral tempest is their atmosphere. Tears within laughter is the expression of this people's soul.

Early the following morning, when Tony reached King George's Theater, she saw Cready's gray derby already dotting the waste of stalls, and on a nearer approach, she found the little manager himself fuming under his important hat brim.

"Look at that," he said with an oath, designating the stage, where twelve little girls in their nightshirts stood rigid in a row. Thin, scrofulous, blinded by the footlights, they held their faces to the auditorium, where, from somewhere in the desolate dark, they knew the manager must be inspecting them. "See what the Child's Protection Act has done for the theater," growled Cready to Tony under his breath. "What I want is a nice kid, yours and Conrad's kid, the little girl in the last act, *cherknow*. Well, the law won't let me engage a child under fourteen years. See the bunch I've got to pick from."

"But so few people look well in their nightshirts,"

pleaded Tony, regarding indulgently her prospective daughters.

"Well, one thing is sure," Cready opined, "you won't get your effect in the cot scene if you have to pray over one of those puny, stunted abortions. And look at their legs—every shape of the alphabet. Why, I could spell my name with their legs. Take those girls away—put them out of sight," he cried to the wardrobe mistress on guard in the wings. And the woman, with a falsely maternal smile, led away the children. "And, see here—you," Cready bellowed after her, "give them some bovril all round, hear? Bovril and Bath buns."

"The walkers-on next!" he shouted, crouching lower in his stall. And from the wings a file of men and women trudged out in ballroom dress and lined up before the footlights. Cready shot them a graceless glance, a guard inspecting his convicts. "Don't slouch, brace up, stand straight!" he cried brutally. "You're guests at a West End ball, not broken down cab horses." One by one he dismissed them from the stage with some scathing remark on their physique. They laughed at his jokes, the poor time-servers, and sneaked off, thankful that their contracts still held. They might be bullied and jeered at, but they were not yet bounced.

The last to go was a chemical blonde, whose opulent form seemed strangled in sequins and net. Cready judged that her dress was *chick*, very *chick*. He knew well enough how *chic* was pronounced, but preferred the word anglicized. "But perhaps it's a bit too Frenchy, eh, Guffer?"—Guffer was the stage manager, a plump little party, resembling a bald ingénu.—"A bit too 'Venus rising from the Bath,' eh, what, Guffer?"

"There's many a true word spoken in jest, sir," said Mr. Guffer, putting on his glasses.

"Well, I'll pass her from here in the stalls, but what she's

like from another viewpoint—the dress circle or the boxes——”

“True, true, sir,” Mr. Guffer agreed. “I’ll just have a peek from one of the boxes myself.” And he suited the action to the words.

With the lack of modesty peculiar to the shapely, the woman stood staring into space, yawning with fatigue and hunger.

“Your fears were unfounded, sir,” announced Mr. Guffer from the box.

“Clear, please,” shouted Cready. And the woman gathered up her bedizened skirt and clumped off, showing her heavy walking boots.

It was an extraordinary scene, and yet the most squeamish could not have taken offense at it, so free was the inspection from any sensual interest, so purely part of the day’s business.

“The gentlemen for Conrad next,” ordered Cready, rearing his feet onto the back of the stall in front of him.

Tony’s heart doubled its rhythm as she saw a group of young men troop out of the wings and recognized among them Eglantine. He was white as chalk and his walking-stick quivered in his hand like a scotched snake.

“Get on with it, gentlemen; get on with it.” The manager was beginning to simmer with nervous irritation.

The ringleader came forward and read a few lines.

“You bark, sir,” interrupted Cready. “You bark like a prairie dog. Thank you, that will do. I’ll let you know in a few days. Next, please.” And so on until some ten competitors were wiped from the list. With each man he turned down, Cready grew more sarcastic, more bitterly, sufferingly triumphant. He flung his short arms over his head with all the agitation of the drowning.

Meanwhile Guffer twinkled about the stage, reading the opposite parts. Supremely unself-conscious, with shining



head and spectacles, he languished as Conrad's beloved and piped as the infant child. For the last five minutes Cready had been growling to himself like a dog, while he dismissed actor after actor with merely a wave of his foot. Suddenly he seized hold of the stall next him as though he meant to tear it up and brain all the remaining competitors. "You next," he cried, nodding his fierce little head at Eglantine, who leant against the scenery and looked about to faint.

The young man came tottering forward, and then—mysterious transformation of the actor when his work grips him—this degenerate boy whose decaying spirit looked out of his eyes, grew suddenly pure and strong as an archangel, a soul seemed to glow in his face, illuminating his forehead threaded with veins, refining the lax mouth, and the theater that for the last half-hour had echoed to such stumbling utterances took up his clear voice with relief. In the dress circle the charwomen ceased their drudging for an instant and stood erect, pressing their scrubbing cloths against their chests, while the great caryatides that upheld the cornice seemed to listen, staring down at the stage between their opulent breasts.

Eglantine finished reading and at first no one spoke.

"Well, Mr. Cready, what did I tell you?" Tony jubilated, something fluttering in her throat.

The manager shut up one eye and made a clucking with his tongue. "He'll do," said he. But when Eglantine came panting to him, with wide, wild eyes, and hair flapping damp, Cready only said, "Well, my boy, I'll let you rehearse on approval, but you've got to simplify. Not so much of this turtle dove business in the throat, understand? Not so much of the Caruso—not all that gargling."

## CHAPTER XXI

ONE day at lunch, "It's a curious thing about stage kisses," Tony ruminated. "One's nose always seems to get entangled with the other kisser or kissee's nose. It's an inconvenience I've never noticed in off-stage, unrehearsed kisses. Why do you look at me like that, David? What is it? Is my face dirty?"

"No, it's nothing—I was thinking, that's all. But surely Eglantine is an easy, finished—what shall I call it?—embracer."

"It's Cready's fault, I think. He flusters me. He's always wanting me to pump up more feeling. 'Passion—red corpuscles, that's what's wanted!' that's what he keeps shouting at me and it makes me nervous."

"Then you don't find Eglantine stimulating to act with?"

"Oh, he's a nice old chump, and clever too. But he has a trick—oh, we've all got them—of losing the page. You see, we are only reading the love scenes as yet. He'll begin: 'The child, our child, will make you even dearer to me.' So far, so good; but what with his having to turn the leaves and at the same time do bits of business like smoothing my hair and framing my face with both his hands while reading over my head, he gets befuddled—says things like 'I love you—how can I ever turn this page?—passionately.—Duck, I can't see to read.' So when I chip in with, 'Kiss me, Conrad, quickly. Oh, kiss me, my darling,' I've had time to go as flat as ditch water.

David was slicing a melon. "What a degradation for a woman to be slobbered over as an actress must be. Don't you ever feel ashamed to say 'I love you,' to say sacred

things to any lantern-jaw or pie-face who answers you back in the same strain for his thirty quid a week?"

"No, I can't say I do. It's all in the day's work."

"And what a day's work, kissing men you don't like, for I'm sure you don't like them."

"Dear me! That's just what my step-mother used to say, only she was afraid that I would like them——"

"And if they were only men who loved you, but men paid to kiss you—kissing you for their salaries! When you marry——"

"David, that will never be——"

"You'll not find a word to say to your husband that a whole gallery won't have heard you whisper. God! It must be a shameful feeling to love an actress. Why, if I cared for a woman on the stage, and if she cared for me—told me so, looked it—I should hesitate to believe her, and say to myself 'She gives just that look in Act III.'"

"Why, David, have you finished your lunch already?" For he had risen, overturning his chair.

"I can't eat," he said, giving the prostrate chair a kick. And he went to the window and leant against the frame, looking sulky and secretive. She was by now accustomed to his veering moods. He was one of those men who can't bear a reverse of luck, a twinge of pain, or an hour of bad weather, without taking it out on others. She offered him her smoking-case. He took a cigarette grudgingly. She lit hers and began to pace the room, her hands plunged in her jacket pockets, striding like a boy. No, she couldn't understand what was wrong in that embrace of hers and Eglantine's. As she spoke of her work, her features, which were broad and inclined to melt into the contour of her face, grew harder, more aquiline.

"You see, it's like this," she explained. "I rush up to Eglantine—well, you stand there for Eglantine and I'll show you." She threw down her cigarette, stamped on it,

and with the primitive directness that characterized her, she came to David and put her arms round him. No sooner had she joined her hands together at the back of his collar when the embarrassing thought occurred to her that she had no right to be where she was. She drew away from him a little, though without unclasping her hands, and glanced up apologetically. He stood stiff and unresponsive, his fists in his pockets, a cigarette in his mouth, and looked down at her with animosity—or was it a sort of perverted interest? Quickly, as though the cloth of his coat burnt her, she took her hands from his shoulders.

“I can’t rehearse with you somehow,” she said, and went downstairs to her own room feeling discontented with herself.

That night when Tony and Pickwick came to David’s studio for dinner, the room was dark. “Where’s Mr. Hearn?” Tony asked of Mrs. Bulsome Potter. That Dolorosa was in the pantry, washing radishes. “Ah, you well may ask,” answered she, and drooped over the sink limp as a mortuary figure leaning on an urn. “Neither you nor I’ll see him for many a day.”

“Good gracious! Why not?”

“Not to speak to likeways, and if be ’azard you run across ’im, ’e’ll give you a ’asty look and go by you like a ghost.”

“Gracious goodness, why?”

“Oh, these hartists, Miss, these hartists! You can take it from me there’s many a man in a ’Ome for the Demented, in a Hinstitution, what would go free if ’e called ’isself a hartist.”

“Has Mr. Hearn gone on a journey?”

“’E’s on no journey, Miss—at least, not what you’d call a journey properly speaking. Mr. ’Earn left me ’ouse at five-thirty, rushed off like a bull was after ’im.”

“Well, where is he then? What’s happened to him?”

"What's 'appened to 'im? As if 'e wasn't took queer in the 'ead all the while." And the landlady's fearsome basso reverberated in the sink.

"Tell me, Mrs. Potter, please. I must know where he is."

"A 'undred and one Full Moon Street—that's where 'e is."

"Why, that's his workshop, isn't it?"

"It is. He's gone to tinker with a himage. Work's a disease with this young man, Miss. I do pity 'im. Drink's a bad 'abit, Miss, but it don't upset a 'ouse like hart can. Oh, I can't abide hart."

"But surely Mr. Hearn must come back here, if only to eat and sleep."

"'Eaven knows when he sleeps. 'Eaven knows w'at he eats. 'E's like a 'aunted thing, creepin' 'ome in the night any time. I leave some food on his studio table and 'e pecks at it quick and guilty like and horff again to the workshop. And if I says to 'im 'You must be 'ungry, sir,' 'e turns mè hinside hout with a look."

Tony hesitated. "He didn't leave any word for me—a letter perhaps?"

"Well, I shouldn't call it a letter. 'E did scribble some-think for you. I saw 'im a-doin' it, lookin' savage the while like 'e wanted to bite you. 'Ere it is." And Mrs. Bulsome Potter took a square of paper off the pantry shelf and handed it to Tony. "Your dinner's ready, Miss, such as it is. Will you 'ave it in Mr. Hearn's studio? 'E says you're free to."

"No, no, thank you, Mrs. Bulsome Potter. In my own room, please." And Tony went upstairs. On the landing she opened the paper David had left her. It crackled as though stiff with bad news. He wrote her that lately he seemed to have wasted his time and meant to make up for it now. She must not count on him for lunch nor for dinner. His hours were too uncertain. She would under-

stand, he knew, if he seemed unfriendly, rushed by her, for once he began to work in earnest he was, he explained, a disagreeable companion. And he signed himself in haste "D. Hearn."

She stood for a moment staring at this "D. Hearn." It had a different character from the rest of the writing. The other words were penned in a rambling, grappling hand, but the signature—no doubt through being perfected in sketches and etchings—defined itself in a bold flourish, the very "This is I" of a celebrity.

Tony took the letter with her to her room and sat down to her solitary supper—well, not quite solitary, since Pickwick was with her. A blanc-manger faced her. It had a dominant personality, and in the center of the table it shook, as though with disapproval. Tony felt herself in disgrace, like a child who is told to go stand in the corner and doesn't know why. It was clear that David didn't want to see her any more. She had too much common sense to rebel. She was far too simple to be offended. But she regretted so dear an intimacy. Friendship was precious, she felt, and it seemed wasteful to sulk in one's room when the being one liked best might pass the door at any moment. Still, he must come knocking, Tony decided, before ever she was cordial with him again. For, though she was a bohemian, large-hearted, light-headed, she had her self-respect.

"Samuel," she brooded, "Father used to say I never remembered I was a Meredith, but upon my word, Pickwick, to-night I'm prickling all over with family pride. From this moment—mark you well, Samuel,—Mr. Hearn is a closed chapter for both of us, and I hope you will have the good taste not to go snooking up to his studio. If in the hall we meet him, I shall bow, of course, but don't you move your tail."

Then began for Tony a lonely fortnight. David avoided



her as though she were an infectious disease. Nor did she, when they met by chance, say more to him than a ceremonious "How do you do?" No, she and Pickwick passed him by with the dignity of two dowagers.

Well, if David was busy, for the matter of that so was Tony. She rehearsed from ten to seven, and at night she had her mending to do. Hers was flighty, hopeful sewing. She wished her clothes together with a needle and a bit of thread. Then every other Saturday she washed Pickwick. Oh, those Saturday nights! The domestic scenes that took place round the bath tub! Samuel disliked these ablutions. He sat with his whiskers just out of water, like a discomfited aquatic beast, while Tony scuttled about, dropping the soap, mislaying the bath towels, and talking all the while to distract Pickwick, with a hectic gaiety.

When she had a free hour, Tony stopped at a theater in the King's Way, where at any moment of the day she was pretty sure of finding Mondragonie rehearsing for Gluckstein's moving pictures.

Nothing is more curious than cinema photography. A calcium light, like a flashlight, only steady, beats down on the players. A strong wind from the machine stirs their hair and clothing, while, with a languor paralyzing to watch, they gesticulate twice as slowly as for stage purposes. Often the plays are extempore, the producer narrating, the performers acting simultaneously with the words. "She meets him at the gate—it's love at first sight—embrace, break away." Nervous work, this, any slip on the actor's part necessitating a new film.

One afternoon Tony found Mondragonie in the back of the pit in tears. She was giving up the profession, she sobbed, her Eastern earrings tinkling with emotion. And as Tony, shocked, protested, she told how in the Cinema Palace the tea department had need of some one heart and soul in the business, and then—well, her Glucky didn't like

to see her on the boards—wanted her to be a lady. He was right, of course. And she had a nippy dress for the cash desk—but—well, it was hard at first; and at times she just had to come back to the theater and sit in the dark and breathe in all the old smells. And she wiped ambition away as she wiped her long pink nose.

Tony, mortally sad, left her. Mondragonie deserting the profession! What a compromise life is for women, thought Tony. And a foreboding came over her, a premonition of ill.

That night Tony came home to find some one besides Samuel Pickwick waiting for her, a shabby form drooping in the radius of the lamp. Hearing the door slam, the figure looked round and revealed the gentle face of Mrs. Jack. With a bellow of pleasure Tony clasped her friend in her arms. But the little woman drew back, timid, obsequious, clutching her reticule, afraid of Miss Ethgrete now, so successful, almost famous.

“I’ve been wardrobe mistress at the Haymarket,” she said hastily, as though she were warning the celebrity not to come too close for fear of contagion, and hurriedly, still standing, she told her story. Jack was out of work—well, he was spirited and wouldn’t take but the best. Ham and Ham, Junior, were hard to place—too big for Pantomime, no presence as yet for supers. She—well, she’d lost her job. Some one had come along who understood the business better and—— She stopped.

Tony felt abashed. She was always glad to give, but hated to mix money with her friendships. Hesitating, humble, she offered to help Mrs. Jack, but the latter interrupted quickly.

“No, no, not that, dear. But say a word for me to Cready. Get me the dresser’s place—and, dear—God bless you!” And the poor wife and mother went away lightly,

with the walk of the stage ingénue, a step she had not yet lost.

Cready accepted Mrs. Jack for dresser. Tony was almost ashamed to tell her. And so, in the see-saw of stage life, the woman who had once been way above her in the status of the theater became her servant now.

Often on her way to the theater Tony went through Full Moon Street and passed before Hearn's workshop. She was consumed with curiosity to see it from inside. What was it like, this roofed space where David's imagination shaped itself in marble? From outside it loomed sad as a factory, sinister-looking as a deserted barn. Only once did Tony see a man enter the building, a workman in a long apron, his hair powdered with a white dust. Sometimes in passing she caught the sound of a hammer on stone, and then, though she never knew whose arm beat the measure, it would seem to her she was listening on the sly, as though she were an interloper overhearing David talking with his work. The façade of this house was studded with windows, small and close together like the eyes of the mean. Under their beetling cornices they peered down at Tony, as though to say, "You eavesdropper, pass on."

One morning she happened again to choose as her way Full Moon Street. She was earlier than usual, and when she came on a level with David's workshop, she saw the door was open and he himself just passing in. She experienced an extraordinary sensation. All the blood in her body seemed to ebb away from her face and throat, while her legs grew weak as though she was just learning to walk. She wanted to turn back and run away, for she felt she looked plain in her old winter suit. But he had already seen her; his small eyes had given her a glance, quick, furtive as a lizard's; he had taken off his hat, and

looking away from her, he stood waiting, as though expecting her to speak.

"I was just passing," she said. And immediately she was angry with herself for seeming thus to apologize for being in the public street, where as a matter of fact any one may be.

He did not appear to know what to say to this and pushed the door open wider, half turning away, as though wanting to be free of her. She thought he had grown thinner and looked stern, as though his work were giving him trouble.

"Won't you come in?" he asked perfunctorily, not caring perhaps to shut the door in her face. But she thanked him and went on, feeling all at once disheartened, her throat contracting painfully.

She hadn't reached the corner when she heard steps following her, and turning, she saw David coming after her.

"I want you to see the work I've been doing," he said, almost shyly. And she went with him into the workshop.

It was, as she had pictured it, a vast, windy looking space, with a glass roof ribbed like a whale, in the center a mammoth shape, humpy, mysterious, swathed in sheets.

"I've done nothing so good," said David in a low, hoarse voice, and he went up to the monstrous thing and began to strip the canvas off it. The protuberances revealed themselves as a group, gnarled and tense, straining to be freed from the marble, life fermenting in hunks of stone. About the monument the scaffolding still clung like a lattice.

David began to talk in the feverish, gabbling voice his work always elicited from him. "See here," he said, passing his hand over some drapery in a brusque caress. "This cost me trouble," and he turned suddenly on his listener, fixing her with his quick, almost vindictive glance.

Tony appeared engrossed in the statue. She made, as she believed, intelligent criticisms, and indeed admired the

masterpiece sincerely. But out of the corner of her eye all the while she was watching David. She was happy to be with him again. A void in her heart seemed to heal and be filled. Apart from the affection she felt for him, a devoted and poignant affection, his mobility of face had always enchanted her. As an actress she admired his range of expression. At times he radiated happiness. At others, when he was discontented, his features seemed literally to decompose before your very eyes.

"Nobody but you and my work people, of course, have seen this," said David, laying his hand on the pedestal. "I'm glad you saw it first. You're mixed up in my mind with it. I thought it out while I was with you." He made her this compliment breathlessly, almost roughly. So he always spoke to her when he liked her best.

Yes, he did like her. He was surprised to discover how much. When he had seen her coming towards him down the street his heart had beat to suffocation. It had thumped as he had never thought to feel it again. For David liked to consider himself as a wan creature, worn out by emotions, a cynic who was born neither to happiness nor love. He was ashamed to find—he who cultivated the temperamental woman, the sphinx, the hardened sinner—that this crude little girl, with only her twenty years to her face, had such power to charm him. How new she looked to life! She was staring up at his statue, the light falling on her obliquely. In the sun her hair showed a warmer color than he remembered it. It curled out from under her Tam o' Shanter like a child's. David felt that never a passion, nothing that was evil certainly, neither worry, nor care, nor too much thought perhaps, had ever troubled this lovely young head. He remembered with regret the hard things he had so often said to her, how he had ridiculed what she respected. He promised himself to look after her better in future, to protect her in short,—for, singularly

enough, the younger a man is the more of the paternal there is in his love for a woman—and he began now by being very gentle and kind and asking after Pickwick.

What was self-conscious, torturing, in their relations, wore off. Tony had feared to see David—she had dreaded it almost as much as she had longed for it; but now, somehow, she felt reassured. She felt for him a tenderness such as she understood. They were both inordinately happy.

He took her to the theater. He guided her by the elbow through the traffic, just as did the cockney lovers about them. The weather was heavenly, as it only seems when the best beloved goes out with you.

When David left Tony at the stage entrance, it was decided that they should dine together again always and be friends as before.

Now when she passed his workshop she would stop in and talk with him, not long enough to disturb his work—just for a few moments. She would call “Good-morning” or “Good-evening,” as the case might be, and he, perched on the scaffolding like a sailor in the rigging, would shout down a greeting; then tack-tick went his chisel and slivers of stone sparkled past him. His workmen, having blocked out the monument, he was at the last touches by now, drilling life, expression, into the marble with every blow of his mallet. In the fervor of creation, he would whistle or sing, joyous as a masquerader in his apron and skull cap. But after a few remarks from Tony, stationed by the pedestal, he would feel lonely among these stone men, and climb down to his flesh and blood friend.

“How that scaffolding trembles,” she would say, and every day she prayed him to be careful. He vaguely promised to have the boards attended to, admitted they were carelessly nailed together, and indeed with every movement of his the scaffold cracked and swayed like a gibbet.



Even at night David sometimes strayed back to his workshop, and Tony, when rehearsals permitted it, came with him. In the draughty building the gas jets, set at intervals along the wall, flared like torches, while David harangued on art, and so did Tony, with a big A. Then somehow, inevitably, they would slip to talking of themselves, then of each other. Never had they known so sweet an intimacy as now, sitting in the shadow of the stone mammoth, confiding their ephemeral lives.

Oh, that first tenderness, when the heart says "Dearest" and the lips "You"; when every hour ticks expectancy, tremor; before jealousy, sensuality, satiety, all the camp followers of love, break into riot. The dear time when one is young!

## CHAPTER XXII

At present the kiss in the third act was, to quote Mr. Cready, more of a tussle than an embrace. He was very exigent and daily now kept Tony and Eglantine protesting love till close on midnight. One morning he called a special rehearsal. To judge by the set of his jaw he was going to set to work. He balanced a gray derby on the back of his head and chewed the end of a dead cigar. "Every one on the stage, ladies and gentlemen, if you please!" he shouted from his seat in the stalls. And though he was very little and the theater very big, he looked as powerful as Jove.

From the wings the men and women hurried as docile as scared children. The fierce footlights bleached their faces. They held their arms out, crooked, so as to break the glare. With narrowed eyes they peered attentively into the black well whence issued the omnipotent voice.

"See here, Eglantine," called the manager, advancing towards the stage with his purposeful, vigorous stride, his cigar dangling between his lips as he spoke, "I don't think you convey enough passion into that embrace, you and Miss Ethgrete. Remember, dear lad, your kiss brings the curtain down."

"Of course, if the spirit of the part escapes me——" cried the touchy young man, turning pale and crushing the manuscript in his hand.

"Tush, tush! dear boy, if that embrace is rightly done, I warrant you four curtains."

"I've given the part of Conrad a great deal of thought,

sir," cried Eglantine, now at white heat. "I play him as a cold young student, a thinker, sir."

"He needn't be a stick as well," cried Cready, his nerves all ajar.

"If by a stick, Mr. Cready, you mean a man of reserved temperament, unused to any display of human passion, it is as a stick that I have visualized Conrad."

"Visualized be damned!" swore the irate Cready. "You're here to please the public, not to specialize in abstruse psychological problems."

"Our ideas of art are not the same," murmured the young man. And he smiled the bitter, one-sided smile that on the stage in crucial situations he always found to be so effective, so pathetic. "Perhaps I had better withdraw from the part," and with a movement of resignation he allowed the manuscript to flutter like a dead leaf to the floor, onto the toes of his patent leather boots.

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Cready," here Tony intervened, "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if that embrace—and a regular I-fear-you-have-the-measles embrace it is, without a bit of spontaneity or naturalness—weren't my fault. You've no idea how awkward I feel when I burst open that door and there's Eglantine in the further wing. 'Conrad, I am yours,' that's all I've got to say, and on 'yours' I'm supposed to be in his arms. I tell you, you have to be in pretty good training to clear that big stage in four words. If you came halfway, Eglantine—what do you think?"

"You might do that, Eglantine, eh?" suggested Cready, nervously sucking his cigar.

The young man smiled a vague, sad smile, like one whose astral body is by now far away. "At the cost of seeming pedantic, I will explain my objection. As I read the character of Conrad, he is not the pursuer. He is pursued by the woman."

"We'll have to work this difficulty out, my lad. Pick up your part." Cready spoke leniently, as one might to a sick child.

The young actor hesitated, flushed, cast a glance at Tony, and obeyed. He stood, his head lowered, smoothing the manuscript with nervous hands.

"The end of that act is a technical puzzle," groaned Cready, to which the indefatigable Tony cried, "We'll have to thrash it out."

"There's nothing like rehearsing—that's the gospel truth. We'll get to work immediately." The manager bit firmly into his cigar. "You needn't set the scene, Guffer," and he settled himself in an orchestra chair, straining forward, his eyes alive with concentration, with power.

"My cue for coming on," announced Tony, taking off her hat and ruffling her hair, "is when the Countess kisses Conrad. But look here, Mr. Cready, it must be a very loud kiss if I'm to hear it through the door."

"Make a note of that, Guffer. Where's Mrs. What's-her-name—where's the Countess? Not here? Give the kiss, Guffer." And the versatile prompter, lifting from his notebook his bald head, assumed the Countess's part. Gravely he minced through the rôle with the graces of a trained seal. No one smiled. Nothing is more destructive to a sense of humor than rehearsing. He gave the kiss, a resounding smack, which somehow lacked the soul of a caress.

"Now I come on," assured Tony, who felt very nervous, and she made two or three false starts. "Conrad," she began—"by the way, where do I come in?"

"By the door, naturally."

"Yes, of course, but where is the door?"

"No, no, my good lady, that's the flue. No, no—Guffer, go stand for the door," cried the manager, in an agony of irritation.

"Conrad," screamed Tony, "I am yours! There! You

see, Mr. Cready, I can't time it. I get no further than the piano."

"Draw it out, dear girl—draw it out. 'C-o-n-r-a-d'—put in two Conrads."

Back trudged Tony to the wings, and this time she took off her coat. "Conrad, Conrad, I am yours," she cried, on her second wind as it were. "There! But you see I'm still three feet from him and puffing like an engine."

"Another Conrad would bring you to the embrace."

"Well, I'll be jiggered if I don't do it this time!" And Tony turned up her cuffs and footed it in the wings, like a wrestler before he enters the ring. "Conrad, Conrad, Conrad——" but at the third Conrad she rebelled. "No—at a squeak I might say 'Conrad, I am yours,' but I should never say 'Conrad, Conrad, Conrad, I am yours.'"

"You don't help her, Eglantine," moaned Cready. "You're like a Maypole, dear boy, and she has to drape herself about you. Hold her to you, dear lad—hold her to you. Nothing looks worse in an embrace than a gap of light between the bodies."

"Since you insist, I will take the initiative," agreed the young actor with a sad condescension, "although it makes my characterization of Conrad inconsistent. Are you ready, Miss Ethgrete?" he asked, bracing himself.

"Right oh," and Tony made another onslaught from the wings. "Conrad, I am yours!"

"No, dear lad—you're not a Japanese wrestler. Good God, man, you love the woman—you're not practising Jiu Jitsu," and the fevered Cready placed his hat and cigar stump on a chair, and fired with histrionic fervor, clambered onto the stage. "Try it with me, Miss Ethgrete," and back went Tony to the starting post.

"Conrad, I am yours—got it," she shouted, smothered against the manager's breast.

"Good girl," beamed Cready, patting her shoulder as one

might stroke an intelligent dog. "All you have to do, Eglantine, is to look up-stage."

"But consider, sir," protested the actor, natural for the first time, "I shall be masked—the audience won't see my face."

"The audience will have to bear it," growled Cready, scrambling down into the orchestra like a giant refreshed.

Until half-past six Tony shouted to Conrad she was his, then went home as tired as a laborer, and as hungry.

Next morning early, before rehearsal, Tony, under her arm a big parcel, her wedding present to Mondragonie—blew into the Villa Sub Rosa to find Mrs. Potts alone in the front parlor, drooping disconsolate, her cap on her ear. At the sight of her visitor, however, she rallied and threw Tony a look as intrepid as the brassy stare of Britannia on the console clock.

"Miss Hem and her gentleman is wed," said Mrs. Potts, very red in the face. "Don't harsk me when nor 'ow. In a *sinnygog*, for all I know. They're horff to Brighton now, first class. Ah, well, I never thought not to see me own child at the haltar. It's crool! crool!" Indeed, Mrs. Potts was exceedingly vexed. She felt that her prerogatives as the bride elect's mother had been overlooked. No favors, no wedding cake, none of those refined stimulants that a broken-hearted parent can indulge in in public.

"And how's Mrs. Blaines, and the children?" Tony asked pleasantly.

Mrs. Potts opined that they were well if they weren't drowned in the bathroom. "It's a trap that place, that's what it is," concluded she. Evidently Mrs. Potts was weaned from the brown bottle for the day, and Tony, unable to soothe the old lady, deposited her gift on the mantelpiece and went back to work.

"If she hadn't been sober, she would have been awfully pleasant," philosophized Miss Ethgrete. "I'm glad she



likes me when she's—well, not quite herself. I'm so much more likely to find her friendly."

Some three days later, "David," cries Tony, bounding like a bomb into the studio, where in the dusk Hearn is trying to finish a canvas in a few brush strokes. "David," says Tony, "what do you suppose has happened? This afternoon every one of the little Blaineses has had a bath."

"I congratulate them, but is it an unusual occurrence?"

"Such a bath as they had is an unusual occurrence, because it was a hot bath, and in their own tub."

"Tony, you are incorrigible. In the name of common sense, why go to the expense of building a bath for people who I make no doubt fear the sight of water and will probably use the tub as an aquarium?"

"For shame, David! Mrs. Blaines keeps her children as clean as what-you-call-'ems, angels when they're young—seraphims. But, David, there was something striking about the Blaines's bath this afternoon—what do you suppose it was? Guess."

"The tub leaked."

"Not a bit of it; there never was such a tub. Only—and it's quite excusable a first afternoon, you understand—there wasn't hot water enough for more than one bath, so Mrs. Blaines tells me when she put the baby in—it was him she put in first—he was almost boiled, and by the time the eldest child's turn came—the long, thin, freckly one, you know—the poor thing came out of the water shivering, and shivering, and shivering."

"The bath doesn't sound like an unmitigated success. And upon my word, Tony," says David, laying down his paint brush and assuming his parental manner—a manner which, while Tony always pretended to chafe under it, secretly delighted her—"and upon my word," says David, contracting his red, Mephistophelian brows, "your charity's,

a little overdone. It's lavish—it's silly. You let this Mrs. Potts bleed you. She could have your clothes off your back for the asking. And she doesn't think any better of you for being such an easy Lady Bountiful, believe me."

"Tiddle-dee-dee." Tony takes off her hat and tosses her hair about her brow like an impresario. "I don't care what she thinks of me. I give because it makes me happy."

"And weak self-indulgence it is. With you it is give, give, give. You can't pass a beggar——"

"David," implores Tony, "don't improve me. I came home feeling so friendly, so pleasant——"

"And what a woman's logic, what preposterous reasoning," cries David in a fine flow of eloquence. "You give to one old son of gin and misery because he looks hopeless, as though he never got anything, and to the next because he looks hopeful and you couldn't disappoint him,——"

"David, David!" groans Tony, putting her hands over her ears and making a most pleasing grimace, like a gar-goyle.

"——and to another you give because he has a family to support, and to the following because he's all alone in the world——"

"David, dear," pleads Tony, clasping her hands in the most engaging manner.

"——and to the one beyond because he's a teetotaler, or so he says, and to the toper further on because he has such a red nose that probably his only pleasure in life is drink."

"As if I couldn't afford to spare a penny now and then to poor dismal things not so lucky as I am. I have money to burn," cries Tony.

"You need what you give away. You can't deceive me—I watch and I know."

"And if I am ever hard-up I can apply to Father."

"You would never do that," said David, who had no high opinion of Mr. Meredith.

"And if for the moment I am—well, a bit short, how about my engagement? In two days now it begins, at forty pounds a week. You seem to forget that, sir."

"Tony, you are the most optimistic creature on God's earth. Not only do you count your chickens before they're hatched—you count them before they're laid."

"And what do you want me to do with my money?" cries Tony, with a dramatic outfling of her arms,—“put it in a stocking for the children I shall never have—that it would be a disgrace for me to have since I've sworn never to marry?”

"Well," advises David gruffly, "I don't lay much stress on the stocking. I should suggest the bank."

And happening to glance from the canvas that had again absorbed his attention, he saw the young girl's face close to his in the dusk. She was leaning across the table, looking at him fixedly, with the disconcerting intentness peculiar to her. Her eyes, alive with some secret thought, met his. The loose white shirt she wore, open at the neck, disclosed her throat gleaming with a golden pallor. In the uncertain light, but for the pronounced rise and fall of her bosom as she breathed, she resembled a little shepherd boy in a smock.

"And so you are still determined never to marry?" David asks, in a casual manner, while looking among the yellow ochers, though it has grown so dark that he can't possibly discern any shades.

"No marriage bells for me," answers Tony with spirit. For some unknown reason she always enjoyed discussing her matrimonial views with Hearn.

A silence ensued. Through the open window the slow English twilight lapped in, the first lazy waves of the encroaching ocean of night. When David spoke again, his voice came out of the dusk low and queer. "Tell me, Tony, have you never loved any one?"

"Why do you ask me that, David?" And Tony experienced a startling sensation, as though a stream of ice cold water had been turned on her heart, a novel, delicious feeling.

"Because——" he was still searching among the yellow ochers.

"Because what?" she breathed, also searching, though she hadn't the ghost of an idea what David was looking for.

Now twilight is a dangerous hour for those who have a heart's secret to keep. If there is some one you love, and that some one must not know, never, never be in the dusk alone with the being dearest to you, for in this treacherous light the face you think of always seems more tender, nearer somehow, as you may have seen it before in a dream perhaps. The stimulant of moonlight, nightingales, shade-checked walks, and silvered waters, is but as a cheap and heady champagne compared with that sensuous, soul-stirring intoxication of dusk. At this hour the beasts are restless, men turn to lights, to fires—all humanity is disquieted. The will is weak, devoured with longing. Hearts grope for each other. Palm clings to palm and lips melt together.

"Because what?" Tony asks, in an ebbing voice; and in the untrustworthy dusk their hands chance to brush against each other, then spring palm to palm. He feels her wrist under his throb, leap, their fingers tremble together as though shaken by a single pulse. And just then in comes Mrs. Bulsome Potter with the tea-pot.

"What I'm bringing you is poison," admits the pessimistic landlady, "but on your own 'ead be it. It's w'at you're always a-cryin' out for, Mr. 'Earn, and strong as lye it is."

David was looking out of the window by this time and Tony into the fireplace. There they stood, as though in disgrace, each in a corner, till Mrs. Bulsome Potter lighted the light, set the table, and creaked and sighed herself away.

"Do you wish me to make the tea?" queries Tony, with unusual politeness?"

"If it's not too much trouble," murmurs David.

Now Tony's method of pouring out the souchong was lacking in that elegance which is supposed to grace the heroine of fiction when officiating at the tea party. In fact, Tony's manner with the accouterments of the tea table was familiar in the extreme. She shook the sugar bowl, she sniffed at the cream jug, she swung the tea-pot about by the handle, she lifted its lid, screwed up one eye, and looked into its contents. And genial, reckless, she poured the tea from a distance, aiming nonchalantly at the cups. When asked for cream, she generally gave lemon, or vice versa, was distressed by her mistakes, and heartily apologized, fell into a reverie over her own tea, which she finally swallowed cold, black, unsweetened, and then, as an afterthought, a consolation, she nibbled the sugar, rolling up her eyes like a squirrel in an ecstasy.

Only the kettle was garrulous this afternoon. It hummed a sly, secret refrain over and over again, while the lamp's blue flame shivered, quivered, as though blown by the disturbing spirit of love. It rapped, it tapped, against Tony's ribs, this disturbing spirit of love, and glancing at David through her eyelashes she concluded, to judge from the decorous way he was carving his muffin, that he felt as heart-shaken as she. Seeing him so meek, she grew fool-hardy and hazarded, "How about yourself, David? Have you ever loved any one?"

"A man's life is so different—you can't of course understand——"

"Don't talk to me as though I were the traditional *jeune fille*. I know the facts of life, and deplorable they are," declares Tony, waving a piece of sugar. "Look at marriage, the unfairest bargain ever struck. Don't start me off, for I'm rabid on the subject. What! a man can order

the heart of the girl he is going to marry, have it made to measure, new, untried, just out of the shop, never having beaten for any one else; and we poor women must be content with second-hand hearts, shabby hearts, patched, battered, repaired, redeemed by us out of pawn."

She ceased abruptly as David leant towards her, frowning a furious frown that cleft his forehead like a scar. He was in his element. There was nothing he relished as much as a discussion with Tony, a quarrel. The refinement of pleasure to him was to heap reproach on her for her sex, her precious sex that made her adorable in his eyes. A dangerous, tingling joy it was to dare to be rude to her, to domineer, to hector, to see how overbearing one might hazard to be without estranging her forever, the dear, detestable enemy.

"I suppose," he suggests, bending always nearer and scowling ferociously, "that in your opinion, once a girl gives her virginal affections, she's a turtle dove, all love, self-sacrifice, fidelity to the end of the chapter."

"I do believe in every woman's life there is only one man—yes, even when she has husbands and lovers galore. Her love affairs before she meets him are premonitions—she's on the lookout for him; and if she loves afterwards—well, it's because she hasn't forgotten him. The new lover recalls the lost, the real, lover."

"You've read that somewhere."

"I may have, but it's true."

"You can't judge of the depravity of women. You must be a man for that. I know a woman, a psalm-singing woman, a woman who made petticoats for the poor. She fell in love with a friend of mine and was ready to leave her husband and her children and go with my friend to the ends of the world, to hell or Timbuctoo. That was on a Wednesday, we'll say; by the next Tuesday she had had



what's called a change of heart. My friend was the veriest stranger to her—no, worse than that, an acquaintance, and she could laugh at him behind his back about his badly-fitting coat. I tell you, women's hearts are like those rooms in a hotel that a careful maid sweeps after every occupant. You'll find little of the former guest, only perhaps now and then the trace of his writing on the blotting pad. The room looks the same this year for Mr. Brown as it did last year for Mr. Smith, the same homelike qualities by the week, the same temporary security, the same fake hospitality. Oh, I'm not blaming women—it's not their fault. Fidelity is the curse of a good memory, and a good memory no woman has."

"Well, all I can say is that the lady who on Wednesday was going to Timbuctoo with your friend and by Tuesday could laugh at his coat must be a right poor specimen, and such creatures don't count, for very bad women, like very ugly women, aren't women at all."

"Pshaw! bad women, good women—how do you tell them apart? Come, give me a definition of a bad woman. I suppose my model comes under your anathema because the poor slut poses to me minus her chemise. Yet if you knew, I've known that girl do things that were sublime—a saint might boast of them, not she. Yet this is she—and this—and this." And he threw some sketches violently on the table. "They shock you, don't they?" sneered David, who was spoiling for a fight.

Tony cocked her head on one side, like an intelligent robin. "No, they don't. I only think she's a bit heavy about the wrists and ankles."

"You mean a common drab like that can't have aristocratic points. That woman is a Juno. Where are you going?" For Tony had jammed her hat on her head and was working her way into her coat.

"I'm going for a walk—I'm trying to reduce. I'm glad

to know what you call a Juno, but I call it plain fat and I'm over-plump myself."

"Tony, you're jealous of this woman—of this Juno."

"Ho-ho, ha-ha, he-he! Oh, this is really funny." And Tony flung back her head and gave quite a mirthful sounding laugh.

"You're a good actress, Tony, but it's not a bit like it. You're jealous. But don't think I'm such a coxcomb as to imagine it's because you care for me. Women are jealous of men they don't give a rap for. It's one of the peculiarities of your amiable sex."

To all of which Tony said, "David, you're right foolish," and she marched from the room. He heard her cross the landing, open her door, and call, "Pickwick, Samuel dear," and the patter of paws.

Now the devil entered into David. Since he was determined not to make love to this girl, he must quarrel with her. He knew her touchy patriotism—there he would attack her. He burst open the door and came after her down the dark stairs full tilt.

"*Right* foolish, am I? What does 'right' mean? It's a jargon, your American language. Why do you speak with a drawl and a drag and a sing-song, Tony? It's a Southern voice, is it? You talk like that on purpose, don't you? You think it's attractive, you know you do. Why don't you admit you do? Why don't you answer me?" He had caught up with her and stood on the step behind her, savage, breathless, teasing. She would not take offense. She would not quarrel. The sturdy set of her shoulders showed her resolute good humor.

"David, you're on my skirt."

As she turned to face him, the curls in the nape of her neck brushed against his breast. He saw the sweep of her cheek, white as foam in the semi-darkness, and her mouth just formulating a smile. A sense of resentment, of bitter-

ness, tingled through him. No, it was no good. He might bullyrag this girl as he chose, never did he seem to get any nearer to her. For, in spite of her crude manner and lack of reserve, hers was a mysterious, an elusive attraction.

In the obscurity he leant towards her and whispered that he disliked her. She inspired him with antipathy, he said. But what he did was irrelevant. He kissed her on the mouth—a hungry, profound kiss. She shivered and swayed towards him. He held her closer, closer. He strained her to him till they were as one body and their souls seemed to drown, to go down in a storm of love together.

“David,” whispered Tony, with a blush in her voice. She freed herself from his arms and leant against the banister. They looked away from each other, abashed and gloomy.

“It’s your fault,” said David. It may be remembered that Adam said much the same thing.

“How is it my fault?” cried Tony, her sense of justice outraged.

“You always act towards me as though I were your chaperon. I’m not your old maiden aunt and I’m tired of being treated as such.”

“Come, Pickwick,” was all that Tony said. But oh, what a world of regret, of reproach, she managed to breathe into those words. They plainly signified, “You, Pickwick, whatever others may be, are always my loyal, constant friend, my protector.”

And downstairs she went with icy dignity. At the door she looked over her shoulder to say, “David, I despise you. Now I know I have always despised you.” And she swept into the street. But all the time in her heart was a jig—no, not a jig, but music alive with rushing melody, with quivering harmony, of which she divined much more could be learnt. Her eyes, she thought, must give away her secret, must tell how she was come into her mysterious kingdom.

She almost feared the passersby would stop her and ask, Who has set that deep red seal on your mouth and breathed into you such a disordered happiness? Her body seemed to thaw, to melt, to be consumed in a delicious weakness. No doubt Eve felt the same when Adam first drew her against his breast in the earliest verdure of Eden.

## CHAPTER XXIII

DINNER that night was a very ceremonious affair. It was "Mr. Hearn, will you be so kind as to hand me the potatoes?" "May I trouble you for the mustard, Miss Ethgrete?"

"You had a pleasant walk, I hope," queried David in a suave, social voice.

"Delightful, thank you." And Tony smiled to herself in an enigmatic and disturbing manner, and tossed her dark hair like a gipsy witch.

At dessert, "This is the last meal I shall ever take under this roof," Tony communicated, balancing some pudding on her fork with a studied indifference.

"To be quite frank with you, Miss Ethgrete, I hardly expected to ever meet you again, 'under this roof,' as you say, although allow me to point out that it is a skylight. You have found comfortable quarters, I hope. May I ask where, but possibly I'm indiscreet?"

"Oh, not at all. I've engaged rooms in Seymour Square."

"And when do you leave?"

"Instantly," Tony assured, with an icy graciousness. "As soon as I put this piece of pudding that you see on the end of this fork into my mouth, I'm going to pack."

"You'll forgive me for not having taken the initiative and left you. It's a question of light, you see. I shall never find such another studio. You, I know, will be the first to understand that art is tyrannical and often makes one seem discourteous."

"Not a word, Mr. Hearn, not a word, I beg you." And with a great deal of manner Tony rose, bowed, and left

the room, while David held the door wide. You couldn't choose between them for politeness. It was all very impressive—at least, that is, considering how well each knew the other.

Some ten minutes later Tony reappeared, to find David pacing the floor, grinding the stem of an empty pipe between his teeth.

"I'm returning the things you were kind enough to lend me," she explained, with a glacial courtesy, "the benzine, the bit of chamois that goes with it, and the blacking. And may I trouble you for my thermos bottle, my glue pot, and the clothes brush?"

"I'll try and find them," says David pathetically, for he always grew sad when he was asked to look for things. Weakly, plaintively, he made the circuit of the room, ransacking the cupboards, and as the depressing influence of his occupation crept upon him, his movements became of a decrepit slowness.

"I am a little pressed for time," murmurs Tony, hardening her heart.

"Well, here's your brush and here's the other thing, but I can't find the beastly glue. It was bad glue anyhow—you said so. Besides, the bottle was almost empty—you know it was."

"It is of no consequence," Tony protests, in the voice of one who proclaims "Largesse!" And with the thermos bottle in one hand and the clothes brush in the other, she prepared to leave the room, her chin tilted.

"Tony, wait! I owe you an apology."

"You do indeed, Mr. Hearn," agrees she, with the manner of a duchess.

"Tony, I didn't tell you a direct falsehood this afternoon, but my manner was not sincere. It conveyed that I kissed you because you were annoying, tantalizing, and I felt no respect for you. But that isn't the truth, Tony. Mine was



the best reason a man can give for kissing a woman, because he loves her."

"You love me?" asked Tony gently, smoothing her sleeve with the clothes brush.

"Oh, very much, and I should like you to marry me."

Here was a dilemma, to say the least. Here was a quandary! After spouting of the slavery of marriage, after denouncing matrimony as a vampire that sucks talent, could Tony eat all such fine phrases and admit "I'm just as other women"? The abnegator of love was a prey to indecision. She stood on one foot, and then she stood on the other, and she smiled a divine but uncertain smile, the smile of a bashful angel on first coming into heaven.

"This is Thursday," Tony ruminated. "David, does your offer hold good till Monday next?"

"Till all the Mondays in the calendar."

"Then Monday next I will answer you, David."

"Tell me now, Tony. Don't keep me in suspense—don't play that old trick on me. To make me suffer because you're able to is a woman's game—it's not like you."

Then Tony, putting down the clothes brush and the thermos bottle, took David gravely by both hands and answered him.

"I used to tell you that once a woman married she lost as an artist, and I mean it—I do believe it. I must choose between happiness or going high in my work. I must decide. Four days are not too much, David."

Her voice faltered into silence. Their love for each other seemed to envelop them, sweetly oppressive, like a perfume, delicious, suffocating. She was as tall as his shoulder and her head could rest where his heart beat.

"What agreeable sizes we are together, David," said she, looking up into his face. And before he could answer her she was gone from the room.

That night Tony packed, that is to say, she stood some

three feet from her trunk and shied into it her belongings, while she sang at full voice alternately, "Onward Christian Soldiers," "Won't You Come Home, Bill Bailey?" This indecorous conduct awakened Pickwick, who stared like a gorgon disturbed.

"Dear, dear Samuel," whispered Tony, and she pressed one of his forepaws in both her hands. The little dog was appeased and reluctantly his whiskers twitched, with him a sure sign of affection. Since the world began, alas, Pickwick is not the only creature who has received a smile from the being he adores, a tender pressure of the paw, that was meant for some one else.

Two days later, Saturday, the morning of the dress rehearsal of *The Prettier Sister*, Tony, in her bedroom in Seymour Square, was told a visitor was waiting to speak with her. On stepping down to the parlor, whom did she see but Mr. Oscar Meredith himself, contemplating his high-bred image in the musty, damp-stained looking-glass.

"Why, it's Father!"

At Tony's startled cry Oscar, pivoting, drooped towards her with his wan, aristocratic smile.

"Well, I wouldn't have believed I should have been so glad to see you, but I am. I'm actually overjoyed, Father!" And she rushed forward, open-armed.

Mr. Meredith waved his daughter from him with his beautifully manicured fingers. He whispered, "You see me here in your—diggings, I believe, is the theatrical appellation, the abbreviation digs—against my will."

"Well, since you've had to come, you might as well be comfortable. Sit down, Father."

Oscar laid on the table his top hat, cautiously, as though it were a sick and suffering thing, and tweaking his trousers at the knees, he was about to sink into the armchair when Tony arrested him with a shout.

"Steady, Father, that chair's not all it should be on its legs. You'll find this one all right if you don't lean back too far."

Mr. Meredith cast a reproachful glance at the armchair and accepted the seat his daughter offered him, after dusting it with his crested pocket handkerchief.

"I had no idea you were on this side of the water," cried Tony, hoisting herself onto the table. "How is step-mother and where is she?"

"My wife is at Vichy, taking the gout cure."

"Since when has step-mother had the gout?"

"She has no gout. I have. And she naturally keeps me company in my health régime and diets with me. All the Merediths are a prey to gout. I am an ill man, Antoinette. But honor, respect for my family, has momentarily forced me to forsake the care of this poor body. It is a parent's duty that brings me to these—ahem—diggings, digs."

"What is it, Father? You make me nervous. Don't beat about the bush. Out with it."

"Ah, how familiar it seems to hear again your characteristic style of self-expression, graphic though uncouth. But to continue. In Aix rumor has reached me of your mode of life."

"You mean that David Hearn and I were living in the same house?"

"Unhappy girl, I do." And Oscar folded the crested pocket handkerchief and placed it in his pocket, allowing the edge to peep coyly out.

"Surely, Father, you know me well enough to laugh at gossip. Scandal mongers may say what they will. When they speak truth, only then can they hurt."

"My poor child. You have never understood that seeming is infinitely more important than being. What is it to be respectable? It is to be respected. And how can you

be respected if you don't seem respectable? I was relieved this morning to find you had left Mr. Hearn's vicinity. Your former landlady—hers is a hyphenated name, I remarked—informed me of your whereabouts. By the way," mused Mr. Meredith, his elegant forefinger resting on his temple, "this young David Hearn is the son of Lord Finister, is he not? Yes, dear me—of course, to be sure," chanted Oscar, in an ecstasy of snobbism. And he enumerated titles and talked heraldry, proving himself the cultured student of the peerage that he was. "Are not Mr. Hearn's arms——" and then followed a dissertation to the refrain of gulls, argent, reversed, etc.

"You had better ask David yourself, Father. He'll be here this morning. He's bringing me some books I forgot. You may think him hideous at first. He's big and red-headed. I expect him any moment."

"He's only third son, to be sure; still," Oscar admitted magnanimously, "all the Finisters of the old branch are well worth meeting."

"Oh, Father, I believe—I really believe—I am beginning to love you." And Tony, bouncing from the table, clasped Oscar in her arms, to the endangering of his glacé shirt front.

"This is very gratifying," whispered Mr. Meredith, smiling a sad, gracious smile over the top of his immaculate collar. "I recognize my impetuous Antoinette of old, always a little lacking in repose, eh? Not quite the *grande dame* yet?"

"Oh, Father, I'm so happy."

"Ah, a rise in your wages—pardon me, salary?"

"Father, I'm in love."

The imperturbable Oscar was disquieted. The droop of his tell-tale eyelid betrayed him. In imagination he already saw himself father-in-law to some seedy mummer.

"A blue-chinned actor, I presume," he hissed with a

venomous sarcasm. "No? A brilliant match, perhaps—a manager? No? You alarm me! Who is there left but the prompter and the call boy? Without undue curiosity, may I ask when my future son-in-law is to be presented to me, for I presume your intention is to marry, is it not?"

"I don't look more than a day ahead at a time. I'm happy enough as it is. Oh, tra-la-la! If I had a voice, I should sing like a bird."

Just then came a knock at the door and Mr. Meredith struck a parliamentary attitude that would have done credit to a statesman about to be photographed. On the threshold a young man faced him.

"David," said Tony, "this is my father, Mr. Oscar Meredith. Father, this is Mr. David Hearn, an actor at certain moments, a writer at others, a painter of talent, already a famous sculptor, and my very dear friend."

"A universal genius!" And suavely Oscar inclined his dome-like brow.

"No, only a jack-of-all-trades." And David laid down the books with a curt nod.

Mr. Meredith, fitting his monocle into his glassy blue eye, fingered the volumes delicately. "'Got's Memoirs,' 'The Life of Rachel,' 'The Art of Making Up.' My daughter, Mr. Hearn,"—Oscar designated Tony with a graceful wave of his hand—"is an actress *con amore*. Acting is her hobby, a young girl's fancy. A Meredith on the stage strikes one as incongruous, does it not, Mr. Hearn?"

"I never thought about it," confessed David, longing to be alone with Tony and heartily wishing the old gentleman might be with the devil.

"No, no; we understand each other, Mr. Hearn," whispered Oscar, looking mighty knowing. And his eyelid hinted at a refined wink. "I think I make myself plain as to my daughter's position when I inform you that she is descended from the old Southern stock of Meredith."

"Ah," said David, blankly enough.

"Fortunately, Mr. Hearn, my daughter is not dependent on what she makes in her—I hesitate to say the word—profession. Acting is her little weakness, her foible."

David gave his coat collar a tug. It was a characteristic gesture and generally prefaced an argument. He smiled—it was a nasty smile—and turned abruptly on Mr. Meredith.

"A foible. That's another word for vanity. To go on the stage *con amore*, as you say, means to shirk your work and take the money other women need to keep them from starvation. The *con amore* business doesn't sound like what I know of To—of your daughter's character." And he gave the urbane Oscar a piercing and rather offensive glance, set his jaw, turned on his heel, and glared out of window.

"This young man," mused Oscar, "must have a very firm social standing to be so rude." Really Mr. Meredith was enchanted with David's grouchy manner.

"Dear me, what is this?" queried the high-bred Oscar, flipping a sheet of paper he had found among the leaves of Rachel's life. "At a charity matinée, a play in three acts, given under the patronage of Her Grace the Duchess of Crowsfoot," he intoned in the voice he kept for the aristocracy.

"That, Father, is a program. I acted in that play."

"An interesting memento. If you will allow me, Antoinette, I must have this paper." And Oscar playfully tapped his daughter's cheek with two icy cold fingers. "Naturally a father, Mr. Hearn, wishes to keep track of his child's progress in her art—eh, Antoinette?" Whereupon Tony hung her head and David smiled a truly diabolical smile. "And now I positively must go. I may say I am satisfied with you, dear, courageous child." And Oscar pressed the ghost of a kiss on Tony's brow. "I have cards to leave at the Embassy—a hundred harassing duties, Mr. Hearn. What do you do this afternoon, Antoinette?"



"I rehearse from two to six, Father, at King George's Theater. It's the dress rehearsal—the play opens Monday."

"Some people worth knowing will be there, celebrities and others," volunteered David, with another of his dangerous smiles.

"I must see my child at her work. Expect me at four at the—King George, I think you said?"

"Yes, Father. I would go with you now, but I am waiting for Mr. Felton. He is some one who has been kind to me and helps me with my work. David, walk with Father a little of the way."

And here, while Mr. Meredith was bowing and looking into the crown of his hat, ensued violent negative signs from Hearn, shakings of the head, and scowls of disgust.

"I couldn't think of disturbing Mr. Hearn," murmured the model of good manners.

"David doesn't really mind," cried that audacious Tony.

"Oh, no, of course I don't," affirmed David, scowling balefully. And he followed Mr. Meredith from the room with a very bad grace. His rudeness enraptured that incorrigible snob of an Oscar.

That afternoon, as Tony was making up for the rehearsal, Mrs. Jack, her dresser—obscure martyr, the breast of whose shabby dress was stuck as full of pins as a Saint Sebastian with arrows—asked, "You're not thinking of getting married, Tony?"

"And if I were, Mrs. Jack?"

"My God! I do believe you are."

"Why do you say 'My God!' and look at me so sadly?"

"Oh, it does seem a pity."

"It's not for you, Mrs. Jack, to run marriage down—you with a husband you love and the strappingest boys in England."

"Oh, I'm different, but you've got many gifts."

Tony leant across the back of her chair and spoke gravely. "Tell me, on your word of honor, do you believe an actress's career is finished with her marriage?"

Mrs. Jack, tidying the dressing-table, made a deprecatory gesture with a stick of grease paint. "You're a superior sort of girl. I only know how it was with me."

"Mrs. Jack, how was it with you? Tell me."

"Well, you see it was this way," the little woman narrated, taking the shoe trees out of Tony's slippers. "When I was your age I had what I'd call a pretty talent. Oh, I can say so now, it's all so far back. I played page boys when I was a child and I went on the road till I got work in London. It was a pretty part I had—one of those sweet parts where you smile all the time and put flowers in a vase—ingénue work—the kind of work to grow old on. You can't play emotional parts after you're fifty—you're voice goes. But the nearer you are to sixty the better ingénue you make. It's queer, but it's so. I was earning money, too. I remember giving mother an ermine tippet and muff for Christmas—lovely ermine it was—none of your catskins. She *was* pleased. And I remember father winking at me and saying 'It's not out of your salary you're making all that.' Father would have his joke."

"And then?" asked Tony.

"And then," said Mrs. Jack gently, "I met Jack. When he asked me to marry him, I couldn't believe my ears, and from that day I think I was as happy a woman as ever lived in London; but from that day my work did go off—oh, it did go off.—Here's the rabbit's foot, dearie.—You see, in the midst of a line I'd be thinking 'I've gone and forgotten to order the pork chop for Jack.' A woman's meals—you know how they are—a bit here and a snack there. But a lot of thought goes to the making of a man's dinner. And then every bit of work I did for him I seemed to put so much of myself into it. With every stitch

I sewed for him—I can't explain it otherwise—something seemed to go out of me.—And then the children——”

“Oh, yes,” said Tony, “the children.”

“After my first baby came I had an engagement at Manchester. You can't leave a baby of five months alone all day. Once I left a rehearsal, thinking I would be back in time for my cue. I missed it. ‘You can't go away during a scene like this,’ the manager told me. I explained I had been with the baby. Then he said to me, ‘It's an actress I've engaged; not a wet nurse,’ and I lost the part. Then three years after, by a stroke of good luck, Jack and I were booked for the Birmingham Christmas Pantomime. I played principal boy—a sweet velvet suit I wore; and I had myself made at my own expense *papier mâché* calves. Then just the opening night the baby—Freddy was the baby then—got the croup. God, how that child suffered! With every breath something seemed to break in his chest. Before I went to the theater I kissed him good-by. I didn't think he'd be alive when I got back, and all the time I was singing and trying to get a laugh, I heard the click in his throat ticking in my head like a metronome. I was rotten—I hardly got a hand. The manager came to me—he was wild. He said ‘To-night is the last night you'll ever come on these boards.’ I don't think Jack has forgiven me yet. No, I never was the *Ingénue*, I never was the Principal Boy I had been, after I had my children.”

“Poor mothers,” said Tony. “They make me think of those birds—what are they called—penguins—no, pelicans, who tear out the feathers on their breast to make nests for their babies.”

“I don't know much about such birds,” Mrs. Jack admitted sincerely, “and I should think they could just as well use straws.—Use the Leichner's No. 3 on your lips—it don't turn so blue in the limelight.—All I know is when you have children your heart is with them and the work

that your heart isn't in never yet got you a good notice."

That afternoon Tony played her part as she never had played it. She didn't act it—she felt it—she suffered it. She forgot the learnt intonations, the taught gestures. It seemed to her as though the character she had brooded over, struggled with, took possession of her, spoke through her. She experienced a profound pity, not only for this woman whose sobs and cries she expressed, but for all humanity. She felt the community of sorrow. In the love scene Eglantine was to her no longer the Leading Man, the antipathetic coxcomb, but the incarnation of all she had dimly known the want of since she was a child. As she stretched up to kiss him in the oft-repeated "Conrad, Conrad, I am thine" embrace, she suddenly thought of David, and for an instant she turned her face away; then something strange happened, for as she glanced straight ahead of her, out into the pit of the theater, she saw Hearn leaning against one of the pillars that supported the dress circle, looking at her fixedly. A sense of shame came over her. She drew away from the bosom of Eglantine's brand new dress shirt.

"Here, here," shouted Cready, straining out of the prompt box, "don't slur the kiss!"

She started like a medium at the voice of the hypnotist. Her part surged over her again. She kissed Eglantine and for the moment he it was she loved best on earth. For the actress must fool herself before she can fool her public. Self-deception, auto-suggestion, is the first law of her art.

## CHAPTER XXIV

TONY, wiping the grease paint off her face, was startled by a knock at her dressing-room door, and Oscar entered, smiling a social benediction. His high hat, polished like his finger-nails, brushed the ceiling of this sordid garret, and his long svelte figure tapered upward like a monument to elegance.

"Very nice, very nice indeed," he murmured, tapping Tony on the cheek with his cold fingers, and his comprehensive bow included the sticks of grease paint, the rabbit's foot, and the liquid white.

Tony was still panting, pale, and her eyes full of tears. "Mine is a fine part, a big part," she whispered in an awed voice.

"It is a big part," acquiesced Oscar graciously. "You have so much to say—some thousand words I dare say. The Meredith memory, eh, Antoinette? Proverbial, my child, proverbial."

Tony shot her parent an enigmatic glance, blew her nose, shoved on her hat, and asked, "Shall we go out to tea, Father? I know a place in Grove Street——"

"Grove Street? I only know the West End."

"Well, how about Ruppledye's—Rufflemyer's——"

"Rumpelmayer's," corrected Oscar sternly. For this ignorant pronunciation of a fashionable haunt offended him. "Proceed, Antoinette," and he waved his pretty white hand toward the staircase.

"Proceed yourself, Father; I've got to switch off the light."

When Tony caught up with Mr. Meredith he was lifting

his hat to the charwoman, who knelt on the stairs with her fists in the pail. He made a ceremonious circuit, murmuring "A thousand pardons," and left that astonished old body giggling on her hands and knees. It was a magisterial descent. If ever a back expressed a mute, shuddering disgust, it was Oscar's pair of shoulders. His long fingers touched the greasy hand-rail with loathing, and his varnished shoe seemed to shrink as it pressed the steps worn by the boots of supers who had plodded up and down for their seven bob a week.

At the stage door Mr. Meredith brushed against Eglantine. The actor withdrew, smiling palely—Hamlet confronted by Polonius.

"Is that young man a gentleman?" asked Oscar.

"I don't know, Father. I never thought about it."

"Never thought about it?"

"No, if you had asked me if he was a good actor, I could have told you——"

"Tut, tut! Antoinette. Less flippancy, please. If I had exchanged a sentence with him, I could have informed you of his exact status."

"I can only tell if I like a man or not. I have no *flair* as to his position in the world."

"But this is *outré*. The Merediths are noted for their social *flair*."

"It's true, I have no social judgment, just as some people are born without a bump of locality. Perhaps I'm a changeling, Father."

"That would explain much." And Mr. Meredith nipped a discolored petal off the gardenia he wore in his button-hole. "To Rumpelmayer's," he directed, hailing a taxi.

With the manner of Lord Chesterfield at his best, Mr. Meredith ushered his daughter into the tea-room. Tony herself made a practical entrance, preoccupied by the thought of cake.



As he drew his chair to a marble-topped table, "We appear to be causing a sensation," whispered Oscar, casting a self-conscious glance over his shoulder. "Do straighten your hat." Indeed, with her Tam o' Shanter on one ear and her curls rippling out over the other, Tony seemed to have ridden on the wings of a gale.

"Antoinette," Oscar hissed in his sibilant whisper, "does any English celebrity resemble me?" And he put one finger to his temple and looked down his nose. "Some man of letters, eh? Some statesman, what?"

"Well, I can't say, Father, that——"

"Exactly. Nevertheless, Antoinette, the people in this restaurant mistake me for some pillar of the British Empire. As I crossed to this chair I was conscious of evoking comment, and now just see.—Really, Antoinette, you must learn to look without seeming to look. All the *lorgnons* in the room are bracketed on my table."

Tony, a teaspoon in her right hand, an *éclair* in her left, smiled genially on the bysitters. "Lud, Father, no. It's me they recognize."

"Recognize—how do you mean?"

"Seen me on the stage, Father—seen me in the charity *matinée*."

"My poor child, to what gross notoriety you are subject! Well, well, it had to be. A Meredith never fails, and success, like the rose, has its thorn. Often, often," Oscar fell into a recitative and turned his profile to the onlookers, "I say to myself, glancing up perhaps from some volume which fails to chain my attention, 'Does my high-spirited child know to whom most of her histrionic triumph is due? Alas, perhaps, no. Youth is proverbially ungrateful.' Does my Antoinette quite realize all her father has done for her?"

"I'm sure I'm grateful for having been born, Father—that's one thing I've never regretted."

"Tush, tush! You have other benefits to thank your poor old father for." Oscar always spoke of himself with a fatuous humility, as of a shabby husk crammed with virtues. He thought it piquant, particularly when he was dressed as now on the very top note of fashion. "A parent's is a sacred trust, Antoinette. The parent is the guardian of posterity. I have faced my responsibilities—I have not taken them lightly. Solfeggio lessons, deportment—geography, terpsichore, all the cornucopia of the Graces, I have showered on my child. And I may say without inflation that she spoke French at an early age."

"Yes, indeed, Father," encouraged Tony, deliberating whether or no to take another cake.

"Who wins in the race—the thoroughbred or the hack? You, Antoinette, have one inestimable advantage over the average aspirant for histrionic fame—you have a pedigree. Ah, ha! You were born a lady."

"Rot, Father!" snorted Tony, with her irrepressible candor. "You say 'born a lady,' as you might say born a genius." And she shook all her curls at Mr. Meredith, while her eyes opened wide, seeming to beam over with innocence, with enthusiasm, and her Tam o' Shanter, askew on her head, balanced precariously. "I should be on the top of the ladder by now if I'd been born in the gutter."

"A most indiscriminate, a most wanton statement!"

"No, Father, you can't guess what a handicap a list of well-behaved forefathers is to an emotional actress."

"Hush, tush! A Shavian trend of thought, a neurotic fallacy! And what might the time be, eh?" And Oscar drew from his waistcoat pocket the very newest and thinnest thing in watches, emblazoned with the Meredith arms, a lion couchant crushing a serpent with both forepaws. The motto read: "Nobilitas vincit."—"Already six-thirty! And I dine at eight with the American Ambassador. Put down that éclair, Antoinette—put it down, dear child. We must

beat a hasty retreat. Where is the person who served us? Ahem, ahem! Here, please. Young lady! Waitress! Mademoiselle! Miss! Yes, you. The bill, instantly."

"Why, Father," Tony sang out, "I made sure your one night in London you'd take dinner with me. Why, I went and ordered a lobster for you, your favorite." Tony looked rather wistfully at Mr. Meredith and blew a crumb off the lapel of her coat.

"What, lobster, a prime table delicacy? Well, well, Antoinette; your finance can be in no such parlous way as I had feared." And Mr. Meredith shook a waggish forefinger at his daughter. "A cozy supper tête-à-tête with my only child. I am tempted. But no, a man of my station has certain duties, none the less binding though they be purely social." And Oscar, having brushed the change of a five pound note into his morocco pocketbook and fee'd the waitress royally, moved to the counter, where, with his Malacca cane under his arm and his hat held on a level with his shoulder, he stood sampling some chocolates. "As a souvenir of a delightful afternoon, allow me." And, with an inclination of his entire spine, Mr. Meredith presented Tony with a box of caramels and marron glacé.

"Oh, Father, they smell heavenly. And see, on the lid, forget-me-nots!"

"I trust in offering you these few confections I am not pandering to a detrimental habit," whispered Oscar, ushering his daughter into the street. "I observe in you, Antoinette, a taste for starchy and saccharoid foods. You are plump as it is, dear child—plump to a fault; and allow me to hint that the Merediths are subject to corpulency."

Outside a sooty mist was falling. Oscar shivered. "I shall but appreciate sunny France the more," he said, and buttoned his elegant frock coat. "Antoinette, adieu." He held out two cold fingers for Tony to shake. She took them and looked up into his face. Her heart tightened as it

always did when she said good-by even to those who were in no way dear to her. "Antoinette, one word. This young man, Lord Finister's son—you might fare further and do worse, eh? When I told him something of ourselves in America, he pretended not to listen, but his English snobism didn't deceive me. He was impressed, impressed, believe me. I've smoothed the way for you, Antoinette. Your father knows the world." He bent and deposited a mortuary kiss on Tony's broad white forehead just where her hair sprouted dark and vital. The instant after he was moving away through the dusk with his automatic step.

Tony looked after him and she could not help but feel that her father, like any passerby on the pavement, was a stranger to her. No ties of blood bound her to this man surely. He seemed a husk, no nearer to her now that she had seen him again than when the ocean was between them. In the best of days father and daughter had had little in common, but now Tony was grown a being of another world, of another caliber. Mr. Meredith's fine airs, his pretentious clothes, confused her. Everything about him estranged her, even that triumphant lion, the crest of the Merediths, sprawling over his watch. And yet that emblem had once been hers, too.

Mr. Meredith's long silhouette passed out of sight. Tony turned and went towards Pall Mall. The mist was lifting, the night promised to be clear, sweetened by premature gusts of summer wind. She hurried through the streets towards the Strand, holding against her chest the box of chocolates.

She kept repeating the words of her part over to herself. She was possessed by a sort of histrionic elation. Emotion, feeling, ecstasy, surged through her. Her body felt of ether. Yes, London should laugh, should cry, with her, for when the heart speaks the world listens. Her youth, her strength, what she had learnt in her twenty years, all

she had felt or suffered, should speak in the voice of her rôle. Night after night she would create a child of her fancy, an ephemeral being whose breath depended on the footlights. The mother who brings life helpless into the world knows just such a terrible ecstasy. So strong a sense of triumph, of omnipotence, swept over Tony as to cause her to come to a standstill opposite St. James's clock. The illumined face of Time stared at her through the mist, like an incorruptible witness to her vow of success. All that is bitter in the actor's life, nauseatingly sad, is redeemed by these minutes of esthetic delirium. He forgets that his manager is as inconstant as the moon, his public, like fortune, fickle, and his forehead knocks the stars.

In this moment of ambitious egoism Tony was ready to sweep from her path any hindrance, any duty that could intervene between herself and her almost unscrupulous determination to skyrocket into fame. A selfish ferocity possessed her. Her Art had risen in arms. There is in the being born to work, to achieve, a terrible tenacity of purpose. He is no free agent. He is the slave of his talent. He must obey its promptings. He is tired, he is ill, the master says "Work" and finds him ready. His heart goes out to some one who stands away off from the goal of his ambition. "Be careful," whispers the conscience of his Art, and he turns from the being he loves.

"I will answer you on Monday, David," Tony had said. It was a cautious answer, a wise answer, but not what her soul had prompted. Had she spoken from her heart, she would have cried "Yes, I will marry you. I must give you my life. I love you." Now that she faced St. James's clock and watched the minute hand spring like a spider's leg every sixty seconds, a sudden disquietude attacked her, a panic of uncertainty. Before her very eyes time seemed ebbing and she was no nearer to solving the problem of her life.

A fine rain had begun to fall. It blew against Tony's upturned face like a curtain of moisture. She shivered, drew up her collar, plunged her hands in the pockets of her jacket, spun on her heel, and turned homewards. The rare passersby smiled as they crossed her in the street. There was something about Tony's sturdy personality that warmed all who came near her with a glow of sheer good humor. The look in her eyes as she peeked over the top of her collar made one sure she must be smiling. In the damp her hair had curled into the tightest of tendrils, and the wind had given her the pinkest of pink cheeks and a nose even pinker. No one could have guessed that this buoyant little figure tramping through the rain was fighting out her future. But her brain was seething with a pandemonium of contrary desires and duties, with a blindness of impulse, an ignorant groping for the right.

On the one hand were ranged happiness, love, the blessedness of being a woman, a weak and yielding woman; on the other, the mysterious force, the obstinacy of purpose that Nature bestows on the artist she has vowed to a certain vocation. Within Tony two voices argued, each expounding, protesting, supplicating. Suppose she let her dear, her secret wish prevail—suppose she married David, what then? She could continue her career as he his. Each should work for the other. She would take his name and between them they would make it famous. So spoke the advocate who pleaded in her heart. "Have you forgotten, then," said the voice of her brain, that cold, glib orator of reason, "that the man to whom you mean to join your life, from whom you will need sympathy and support, thinks your Art a poor thing and ranks an actress but little higher than a clown? What is the union of two beings worth when the woman aspires for something the man thinks unworthy? Tell him of your work—you know the result. He yawns. Tell him of your ambitions, your unquenchable enthusiasms,



and he pokes fun at the whole tribe of play actors, those monkey artists undermined by the vanity of strutting in public, those grown children who paint their faces and pretend to be some one they are not." But love had a ready answer: I need never talk of my career, thought Tony, and David shall never know he hurts me by his contempt for my work. In time he will grow to respect the steady pluck it takes to make an actress. "You will be two selves then," prompted ambition, insidious, persistent, "the woman who loves, the mother perhaps, and the artist. You must cut your heart in two then, and that is never good. Your inner being will be at war, the wife against the actress; one side of your temperament will trample on the other side, and one half of your nature be utterly destroyed. Shall I tell you which half?"

It's true, thought Tony, I've always been afraid of love, and when other girls talked of it and looked forward to its coming, I've thought of my poor mother and what bad luck it brought her.

"And will you throw away such a warning?" insinuates ambition. "That distrust wasn't sent you for nothing."

"But I shall be so unhappy," protested poor Tony. "I've grown very lonely since I've gone on the stage."

"Loneliness is good for those who have work to do in the world," suggests Tony's austere adviser, her artistic conscience. "For the woman family life—there's a plebeian word for you and one that doesn't spell fame—means a hypnotizing round of petty duties, and when the children come——"

A child, thought Tony, a new life in the world—half David's and half mine. To be sure a child wouldn't do my work much good. At the theater I should be thinking of it always. Indeed I don't know how I should bring myself to leave it—I should dote on it so.

"Are you to be just a mother, then?" ambition hissed,

"a settled, comfortable matron, one foot on the fender, the other rocking the cradle? Was it for this you lost your home, your position in the world, and without help, without friends, slaved in a strange country? What a bad economy! Success is within your grasp! What a price to pay for the dull contentment of marriage! And even then, are you sure of your bargain? Will you not regret it? The unrest of your childhood, your turbulent ambitions—can you make an end of them, can you bury them deep enough? Will they never rise?"

"But after all, marriage doesn't mean that a woman's career is on the shelf," argued Tony. "Not a bit of it. Her husband isn't her enemy. He loves her and will help her."

"You've forgotten the sort of man you have to deal with," whispered her talent on the defensive, "a man with an all-absorbing personality. You will serve his Art, not he yours. He will make of you a sort of handmaid to his artistic vanity. Your business will be to praise, to talk of him; to afford inspiration. He will batten on you. For every statue that comes out triumphant from under his hands, your enthusiasm will have paid for each curve of its beauty, and the priceless gift that is yours, the power to represent humanity in all its moods, will be sapped away."

"I want to do what's right," said Tony aloud and very much to the surprise of a sentry who was staring from under his bear-skin hat at the end of his bayonet. Her conscience, however, did not speak. A treacherous thing is conscience, and it doesn't do to count even on that small, still voice that the moralist declares it possesses. Tony trudged on through the rain, torn by indecision, longing for guidance, and brooding on how hard it is not only to do one's duty, but to know it.

"Since you hesitate, since you can't read your own mind, doesn't that prove that he's not so dear to you?" So spoke her brain, that cold advocate of anti-love. And instantly,

as though in reproach, the memory of David's face rose before her with the vividness almost of a vision,—that proud, sensitive face, so gifted for suffering. Surely he needed some one all happiness from head to foot, some one ready to make an impudent face at misfortune. Tony, for instance, to buoy him up through life. "I love him dearly," said Tony to herself. "Best in the world. More than every one else put together." And she thought of the kiss that had been between them—that disturbing and profound caress. It had penetrated her through and through, teaching her blood a new rhythm.

As she was thinking this, she passed along the Embankment Gardens, that sylvan inclosure secreted in the heart of the city. She glanced up, and through the mist she saw the contour of the trees, indistinct clouds of foliage, aloof, mysterious, fading out of shape in the dusk. Oh, to be done with this vacillating—to come to some decision—no longer to be torn by this too clear-sighted perception of the contending possibilities of life! Now that the words "profession," "career," apply no longer exclusively to men, many women daily ask themselves this question: "Fame or happiness, love or art?" And at such moments they must feel, if not their inferiority in the scheme of nature, at least their inequality with men as conquerors of a complete happiness, their terrible inability to get everything out of life, the curse of their womanhood. The man fights for his desire, the woman pays for hers. Power of some sort is the man's weapon; barter, exchange, is the woman's, if not sacrifice.

Tony's was the inevitable dilemma, and whichever way she decided, she felt herself to have failed in a care intrusted to her. When she had gone on the stage she had hurt many friends, estranged many affections. Surely she must justify herself in the eyes of those who had loved her at home. Yet even to think of forsaking David, of

barring him out of her life—for there could be no half measures now—made her ache with a sort of despairing tenderness.

Now for the first time she understood that she had always loved him—yes, even when first she saw him staring at her so glumly. Something in him had called out to her—not the strength of his self-concentrated nature, not the power of his talents, but a something baffled, groping, piteous, that partook of the child. She had been happy at Webster's. Why? Then she had thought it was because she was gaining in her work. Was that it? No, not quite. David had been there; a turn in the corridor, an exit in the wings could bring them face to face. Of all the comedies she had loved *As You Like It*, best. Because she had played *Rosalind*? No, not entirely, for in the rustic dance she and David met and spun around together. A lightness, a gladness, would then possess her. She would whisper something impudent to him, something she had thought out during the morning to thoroughly annoy him. How delicious those quarrels were, how near their bickerings had brought them each to the other. To say "You old ass" when you mean "My darling," gives a singular, an acute pleasure. How was it that she had learnt to love London and no longer regretted Virginia? Why had she felt no homesickness among these strangers, among these funereal fogs? David lived here, that was why. Since she had known him every hour had passed to an indefinable harmony. Should she shut out this secret song? A life without love is like a lyre without strings. Yet no human being who thinks, who feels the responsibility of an artistic gift, dares to let his talent rust unused, unless—unless—oh, what racking indecision! That such a world of uncertainty, leaping, palpitating thoughts, impotent, contrary, should be held here in the brain, in the skull, in a little bit of bone and skin stretched tight!

## CHAPTER XXV

TONY was come by now to Blackfriars; on her left the church of Saint Joseph showed an oblong light. Its doors were thrown open, an odor of lilies, poignant, a little sickly, floated out. For a moment Tony stood on the steps, arrested by the galaxy of light that radiated from about the altar. In a niche facing the aisle the Virgin was enthroned; her azure robe, her bare feet shod only with sandals, and the golden rose, made her seem a stranger to this climate of cold and fogs. Holding the little Christ against her wooden breast, she stared out into the London dusk, indifferent as an idol in a foreign country. She smiled a vacant, mysterious smile.

She seemed nearer in the school chapel, thought Tony, regretting the convent where much of her childhood had passed. The Mother of God she remembered had then appeared to bend down from the altar, yearning over every whispered secret. What a certitude of protection Tony had felt in those days before she had taken up the burden of a career, before she had gone out into the world. And for a moment she was oppressed by regret, by that sense of loss which even the young feel when the past surges back.

Just then the door swung to, shutting out the exotic brilliance of the altar. A little old woman had emerged from the church and was feeling her way near-sightedly down the steps into the street. She wore the humble dress of the French nun, the full overskirt and drapery, the starched headdress, stiff with a provincial charm. In one hand she carried a paper parcel, in the other a huge um-

brella of antiquated aspect. Her boots pattered on the pavement with the hurried click of a pony's hoofs.

"Sister Mary Magdalene!" and Tony flung both arms round the best friend of her childhood. "Oh, I am glad—I am surprised," she kept repeating in a sort of breathless chuckle. "Well, I never. Who would have thought I should see you here now? I've forgotten all my French. Oh, what a happiness!"

"Madame? Madame?" gasped Sister Mary Magdalene, much discomfited, for in the dim light she had not recognized this muscular enthusiast who like a bear was hugging her.

"Don't you know me?"

"Madame, I cannot tell; I have not yet seen you."

"Look me in the face. Oh, what a pleasure I feel!" And Tony darted back several steps, putting herself into focus.

"Tien, it is 'Toinette." And the kind old eyes smiled from under the nun's hood in an eclipse of wrinkles. "But even now I come from where you live. I have not forgotten your address, you see. I have your letters here," and the nun tapped the alpaca pocket that hung from her girdle, while her secreted keys betrayed themselves by jingling.

"What a pity I was out. Come back now."

"No, no. As it is, I have missed the Angelus."

"Then you're staying at a convent?"

"Yes, I lodge with the Sisters of the Assumption."

"Let me walk with you, my Sister," said Tony, "and give me your bundle. It must weigh a ton. Yes, that's right—and your umbrella."

"No, no, not the umbrella. It lends me a countenance," declared the good sister in her quaint language. This umbrella was her staff of office, no doubt, her companion amongst the traffic, some one who had traveled with her from France.



"This way, my Sister," cried Tony, shouldering the bundle. And she pointed down Essex Street with one of her unconscious gestures, the large sweep of the arm characteristic of the actress, taught to exaggerate every action, to instil a meaning into every movement. She had forgotten to put on her gloves and her hand peeped out of her rough coat sleeve as white as an albino bird. "We'll go through St. James's Park," she said, "over there—see?" At the far end of the outlook Buckingham Palace soared against a background of sunset colors, stripes of scarlet, orange, of Nile green, a barbaric violence of tone lit up all the west, and London, accustomed to a more temperate sunset, seemed surprised by this hemispheric glow.

Together the nun and the young girl passed through the park, smiling at each other with a tender gravity. Under their feet the soil sweated with damp; on the surface of the river fog floated, while arrogant swans trailed by, undulating their serpent necks, their breasts wrapped in mist. Sister Mary Magdalene, a little breathless from the pattering haste with which she proceeded, told how a responsibility had come upon her, a charge she trembled under. The Mother Superior had commissioned her, with seven other Sisters of her order, to bring over to France the English Catholics who meant to take their sick on the great yearly pilgrimage to Lourdes. And through her talk of travel, of organization, pierced a regret for the sheltered life of her convent, for the homely duties she understood. A guileless old woman she was, shy of time-tables, dazed by traffic, set adrift in all the terror and bustle of the world.

"And you, Antoinette?" asked Sister Mary Magdalene, smiling at the young girl, who seemed the elder sister of the child she had loved. "Has all gone well with you?"

The bundle slung on her arm, her cap set back on her curly head, Tony strode on at the good Sister's side, with all the vigor of a second Dick Whittington come out to

conquer London. She told of her struggles, her days of disheartenment, her famine for success, and of brighter things, too; her love for her work, the friends who had helped her, the big prospect opening out before her. "And sometimes," she said, "I'm glad I haven't got to the top yet—that I have my work cut out for me still. And when things go wrong, I say to myself, 'Thank God for a difficulty.'" She ceased speaking and looked back over her shoulder. The park lay behind her, swathed in mystery, in fog. Here a light burned, there another, and something purposeful, secret, seemed to emanate from each spark as though it flamed for some unseen shrine alone.

The squall of a motor horn made Tony turn. Close on her left the traffic of Buckingham Palace Road surged. Motor-busses heaved by, across their bows flamed in scarlet, posters of *The Prettier Sister*. At this heralding of her name she felt suddenly abashed—she did not want to read of Miss Ethgrete's fame just then, for it seemed to Tony it was her childhood that walked at her side to the jingle of Sister Mary Magdalene's keys.

"When I saw these," and the nun designated the auto-busses with the handle of her bulky cotton umbrella, "and on them the name you wrote me is now yours, spelt out in bold letters, I felt a singular emotion—a disquietude. I was afraid for you. I thought of a prayer we have where I come from in Brittany. Our fishermen say it before they set out for the Iceland season. 'Dear Lord, watch over us. The sea is very big and we are very little.'"

On the steps of the Assumption, "But for all that, how you've grown," ejaculated the nun, looking up into Tony's face. And they stood for a moment smiling at one another, each re-reading the past in the other's face. Then Sister Mary Magdalene, beaming good-by, edged herself, her bundle, and her voluminous umbrella through the postern into a paved court where two tall nuns, pale as phantoms,

went pacing; and Tony turned back in the fog, towards what she called home.

As she was crossing Trafalgar Square, "It's a nasty night I'm sure, Miss," volunteered a voice at Tony's elbow, "and a late *hower* for an agreeable female to be out hun-attended. I do 'opes as that 'ansome dog of yours hain't hailin'."

"He's very well, thank you," assured Tony, gratified. And she stopped to smile at her friend the crossing-sweeper, who, crêpe hat in hand, bowed with a sort of clerical sweetness.

"Why, your hat has lost its crown," Tony burst out in sympathy.

"And look at the brim, Miss, as ripe as an old pear."

"Dear me!" said Tony, beginning to turn out her jacket pockets.

"Don't you mind me, Miss, I'm an old sodger, I am——"

"I wonder where I could have put that pocketbook——"

"It was bullets in South Africa as beat on this 'ere 'ead and now it's the snow and the 'eat." All this with a saintly playfulness.

"I am sorry," protested Tony, "I came out without a penny; but I shall be passing to-morrow surely, and——"

"Scrutinizin' pains I 'ave, Miss. It's near to an octo-geranium I be. But what of that?"

"Isn't it too bad?" agreed Tony. "Wait—hold on—I've found something. Oh, it's the candy Father gave me—sweets, you know. Soldiers eat them in the army, don't they? Perhaps you'd like them."

"If they're soft I'll 'ave 'em."

"Well, I'll give you half."

"Did you mention the word father, Miss?" queried the crossing-sweeper with a social, five o'clock tea manner, while swallowing a marron glacé.

"Yes, you didn't know I had a father, did you? Well,

I have, though," declared Tony with considerable pride, "and it would only depend on me to have another relative."

"Is it a 'usband you mean, Miss?"

"It is."

"And you all of a flip-flop over decidin' if you'll take 'im."

"Well, I am rather."

"If I may make so bold, Miss, my piece of advice is always take what you can get as soon as you can get it. It's like when you're cleanin' a crossin' and come across a ha'penny. Pick it up then and there, I says. Many's the ha'penny I've lost through givin' one more push of the broom before I stooped for the blarsted thing."

Tony, her hands crossed, her head a little on one side, listened gravely to this open-air philosopher. Every now and then the wind wound her skirt tight about her narrow thighs.

"The sweet as I'm eatin' is 'ard, very 'ard," said the crossing-sweeper, and with a smile of angelic fortitude he added, "I've only two teeth, Miss, and they don't meet. When one chews, the other bites me, which seems a waste, as you might say."

As Tony threw open the door of her sitting-room, she saw against the unshuttered window a man's figure.

"I have been at the rehearsal." It was David's voice speaking out of the dusk.

"I know." And the hand she had lifted to unbutton her jacket fell at her side.

"Tony, you cannot act such a part."

"Cannot?"

"Must not. If you respect yourself, if you respect your profession."

"Why?"

"Because it's a vile part—an infamous part. Because it's nothing more nor less than *The Harlot's Progress*."

"What you tell me has hurt me," she answered in a deadly level voice. "We must talk this out, David. Sit down."

"What I have got to say I can say better standing."

She made a quick gesture, as though to ward off some danger. "Wait." Deliberately she closed the door, turned on the electric light, came to the hearth, and faced him. They were both very pale. "David, I am ready to hear you. Go on."

"You see I'm quite calm, quite reasonable," he began, the nerves in his face twitching, "but I can't forget what I went through this afternoon. Great God! Have you no sense of dignity?—I'm perfectly self-controlled, you notice. Frankly, don't the intrigues of a neurotic, degraded woman disgust you?"

"Degraded? Yes, perhaps she is. I never thought of that before. To me it is a very beautiful part."

"Beautiful? You are speaking from a professional point of view, I suppose. The part gives you an opportunity to rant and have hysterics. That's why you relish it, isn't it? That's why you find the part beautiful. Tell me, isn't that why?"

"No," she answered patiently, "but because it's human. Of course, it's very sad, very terrible, but so are most beautiful things."

"You call such nerve storms human, do you—such epileptic tantrums? Oh, you've lost in my eyes—you've gone down, and I, who thought you so different from other women! To play such a part as yours is to prostitute yourself to an audience, to give yourself to a whole gallery."

Her eyes had never wavered from his. Now they darkened with reproach, with pain. Her hand went to her throat. It was a queer little gesture. It meant, "You have wounded me. Is it a deep wound, I wonder?"

"All you actresses are the same. There's no dirty work

you'd stop at, there isn't a dirty thing you wouldn't do to get a lead. You are going to tell me that this part is your London chance——"

"No, not only that, it's a piece of myself, but oh, so much more precious—it's like my own child might be to me."

"How incomprehensible you are! What can I say to you? The women of the streets, you pity them, don't you? Yet you feel no shame at the thought of being morally naked before five hundred people. No, no, don't answer me. You almost make me hate you."

"David, David, take care. You'll be sorry for what you're saying."

"Tony, my dear little Tony,"—and grasping her hands he dragged her to him and held her against him with a sort of breathless tenderness.—"I'm older than you. I know life better. I ask you humbly—yes, see quite gently and nicely—to give up this part."

"David, if you knew how hard you make this for me!"

"You will not?"

"Be reasonable, be just. How can I at the eleventh hour break a contract? Cready would lose heavily. Why, think, dear, even the poor supers are engaged. They, too, would lose. Monday we open and to-day is Saturday."

"It's only a question of money. You haven't enough, but I have. I can buy you off."

"What you ask of me is not an honest action—it cannot be done."

"You mean you will not do it."

"I do."

He released her wrists as though they had burnt him, took his hat from the chair, and went to the door. On the threshold he turned.

"No, no," he cried, as to himself, and coming to her with a sudden gentleness, he led her by the hand to the looking-glass. "Look at yourself, Tony. Look at yourself well."



"Yes," she answered. But it wasn't her own reflection she saw, it was his. He was fighting for her honor, for her soul, he believed, and for their happiness together.

"Tony, once I read that some woman had a lovely expression, 'as though,' the book said, 'she had smiled often at little children.' That's the way you look to me. If you act this part you will succeed; you will play adventuresses to your dying day in London. The critics will have labeled you. Every night you will imitate the harlot and the looks of lust will work into your face. In some three or four years you will be changed, quite changed."

"You torture me, David; you torture yourself."

"Which is dearer to you, your art or me?"

"You ask me an ungenerous question."

"I understand. Your art furnishes you with an excuse for every self-indulgence, for every mean action. You draw a moral capital from your precious art. You dabble in self-sacrifice and boast of all you've given, as though a woman had anything else to give but love. You can give nothing—ambition is the stuff you're made of. You talk of the cruelty of love. You entertain a Sapphic terror. According to you love sucks a life away and you'll be free of it. All of which is very poetic, very pretty. But your secret thought is, 'If I marry I may degenerate into a housewife, a patient Griselda, and my name may figure less often in the papers. God forbid that I should have a child,' you say, and you quote Schopenhauer. But Schopenhauer isn't your real reason. You're afraid—yes, afraid of dying with all your work to do—afraid of losing your figure—afraid the brat may keep you awake of nights and you won't have vitality enough left to give to your art. Your Art! shall I tell you what your art is? It's a monster. It's throttled the woman in you till there's nothing feminine about you but your skirt."

A primitive argument came to her, a supreme answer,—

to cling to him, to hold him to her close, close. And when he, weakening, bent his head down to her, then she would whisper "Is it true I'm not a woman?" as his lips met hers. Instead, she stood rigid. She let him go from the room, down the stairs, into the street, and out of her life. "If he loved me," she thought, "he could not have left me like this." Something trickled down her face, tepid, like a drop of blood. She brushed her cheek with her hand and found she was crying.

Now tears were as rare with Tony as with a veteran. Samuel Pickwick, coming into the room, stood confounded. For all his pomposity, no dog ever had a better heart than Samuel. The little mongrel was as faithful as a mastiff and kind as a Newfoundland. He was also acute—as acute as only a mongrel can be. His face became more wrinkled than a baked apple.

"My poor Pickwick!" said Tony, clasping the little dog in her arms. "My dear Samuel, my dear little friend," whispered she, smoothing the head that held the dog knowledge of many breeds. "You love me, I know it, Samuel Pickwick." And she stroked his fat chest where bounded his ever faithful, canine heart.

## CHAPTER XXVI

THE morning found Tony sitting on her bed, staring ahead with a wide, scared gaze. During the night an idea had taken possession of her such as only an actress's brain, fertile in superstition, could conceive. "If," she had thought, "David and I don't make it up before I play to-morrow in *The Prettier Sister*, I shall fail. All the hard things we've said to each other must bring bad luck." She was like a soldier who, before going into battle, won't leave his friend without a handshake. Another sun should not go down on her wrath, she determined. Yesterday David and she had said good-by as lovers. But did that make them enemies? Could so tender a friendship end like this in a few harsh words? She would go to him now that all thought of marriage was done with—and better so, for since they had talked of love there had been no happiness, no intimacy between them. She would go to him and win him back as a friend. In this crisis of her life she could not bear to think of him as an ill-wisher.

All day, a distracting day, Cready at the telephone, newspaper reporters at the door, she demurred and shilly-shallied, but after dinner her heart prompted her so imperiously to go straight to David, not to lose her best friend, as to speak louder than hurt feelings—proper pride even; so leaving Pickwick snoring, she threw on her *béret* and went out into the street. It was nine o'clock at night. On Mrs. Bulsome Potter's doorstep, "Is Mr. Hearn in his room?" Tony asked of the maid.

"He was expected for dinner, Miss, but he's not come. He's at the workshop, I should think."

Tony thanked the girl and made her way towards Full Moon Street. She expected to find David mulling over his statue still. He was in the habit of prowling around it at night, gloating over it under the gas jet. However far his work had advanced, he never ceased brooding over it. As Tony turned into Full Moon Street she saw a light lurking in Hearn's workshop. It sifted through the squinting windows. The workmen, she knew, went home at six. Besides, Sunday was their holiday. Hearn himself, it must be, was there alone. She went towards the building, her heart in her throat. She pulled the bell once, twice, more. The street rang with ironical echoes. The door remained shut. She put her hand on the knob, turned it, and walked in.

It was like Hearn to leave the gas flaring and the door unlocked. Yes, the gas was screaming at top notch in the draught. Each jet cast a pool of light on the floor, where infinitesimal slivers of marble sparkled. David was nowhere to be seen. In the penumbra the statue loomed nakedly pale. Its cerements had slipped down and the wind from the open door stirred the linen against the pedestal with a lapping noise. There was a change in the place, too,—some indefinable change. What was it? Yes, she knew what had happened. The scaffold no longer caged the far side of the monument. But if so?— A premonition seized her. She made the circuit of the statue, she saw the hidden side, and drew back startled. At her feet was a wreck. The scaffold had fallen, strewing the ground with splintered boards, broken beams, while stretching out of the driftwood, almost touching her shoe, was a white thing—a human hand.

Tony was afraid. She felt no pity, no anguish, she pulsated with mad physical terror. Her animal instinct told her to run away and leave whatever was there under this rubbish, leave it lying still in this dim building among the droning gas jets, hide, know nothing about it—let others

find it. And yet in an instant she was on her knees, breaking her nails on the boards, burrowing through the heavy timber till, crooning like a mother, she drew David's body out of the wreckage.

No one within call—oh, the cruel isolation of this place! And this inert weight dragging her down—the head, dumb, earth-stained, sagging to one side, showing the breast of the shirt speckled with pale drops like rust.

She tore off her coat—made it into a pillow. She ran into the street, gasping for help. Not a soul in sight—not a step tending this way—store-houses, uninhabited garages all about—only a few lights here and there at a distance. In Christ's name, what should she do! . . . Telephone?—There was one in the little office off the workshop. David had told her so. Thank God for it!

The room was dark. She floundered and fell against the telephone-stand. "The Midland Infirmary," she said, sobbing the words into the receiver.—"One-six-naught-one," recited an automatic voice. Tony panted out the number, asked for an ambulance, and called up Felton. She cried tears of relief when she heard his voice, told him what she knew, and begged him to come to her.

Some ten minutes later, when Felton reached what had been Hearn's workshop, he found Tony half-sitting, half-kneeling, rigid, terrible, disputing with Death for the pale head that lay in her lap.

"The patient is suffering from concussion. The ribs and upper end of the left arm are fractured."—The surgeon, in giving his diagnosis, glanced away from Tony to Felton. "The young man won't last out to-morrow, if, as I incline to think—though it is too soon to affirm it—he has sustained intra-cranial injuries." And under Felton's insistent eyes, "Uremic coma has already set in."

"May I stay here to-night?" asked Tony, looking in the

surgeon's face—a face beaded with sweat, almost fierce in its concentration.

“If the matron permits, I have no objection, so long as you don't come near the patient.” And he went away stealthily, in his white, ghastly apron.

In the waiting-room Tony crouched. She rocked to and fro in the chair, shivering and whimpering. She was cold—cold. Nothing mattered but this agony of cold. Her teeth chattered so persistently that her jaws ached. Felton put his coat over her and gradually the frenzied chill wore off. Something stirred in her memory. O God! the head that had lain in her lap, the head dun-colored as the earth to which it must soon return. Tony knew best what indomitable ambition, what stress of genius had throbbled in that forehead, what a proud mind must end now in a few hiccoughs of blood. Who dares trust in Providence who sees the waste and satire of its ways?

Tony crept away from Felton and went straying in the corridor. She knelt near a window and crouched there shivering through the night. She saw the dawn creep stealthily over the roofs. A wind arose and shrilled in the chimneys. She had heard that life was at its ebb in this wan, sick hour. An insane fright took hold of her. She crept to David's door and sank down in a cold sweat, listening and praying. The handle turned. The door opened. A nurse came out of the room. She started when she saw Tony, for she was a girl as yet new to the business.

“Is he better?” asked the poor child, reaching up from her knees.

The nurse meant to answer, but instead of words a queer sound came from her throat like a sob. Then Tony knew that he was dying. After that she was afraid of no one. She would see him—they must say good-by. She went to his bedside. She took his unhurt hand in hers. The surgeon, his assistant, and the two nurses turned away. Tony



put her arms round David and held him against her breast. His head fell forward slightly, his mouth drooled blood, his eyelids never lifted. O God, can there be anything more fearful than to feel the life you love perhaps better than your own, ebbing away in your arms—to be pulsing with health and not to be able to share your strength or to give it all! Tony called David by his name, her dear David, her best friend. Her face sank against his. She heard some one say, "Take the little girl away," and when she opened her eyes she was in the waiting-room, Felton bending over her.

An hour or so later Felton left her, to send at her request a telegram to Cready, telling the manager Tony would not leave the hospital—could not play in the first night of *The Prettier Sister*.

Now Cready was a man of action, a Napoleon. No event ever shook his nerve. When on Monday morning he read Felton's message, he swore, but ever so softly. Then he called for his gray derby and a black cigar. As he put his head out of the taxi before the Midland Infirmary, he promised himself, "She'll play to-night if I have to call out the police." All the unshuttered windows of the hospital stared back at him like lidless eye-sockets. Here and there a blind was lowered and pain seemed to lurk behind it. Cready tipped his hat to the matron and stated his business. "I must speak with this young lady—this Miss Ethgrete," he said, and he threw away his unlighted, semi-chewed cigar.

In the waiting-room, as he marched up and down the linoleumed floor, "Is this chap—this Hearn," he asked, consulting a bit of paper, for Felton had followed up his telegram with a letter of explanation, "likely to pull through?"

The person he questioned was a nurse all starch, with a stony gray eye, hardened to pain. "I don't know, sir," she answered indifferently. "I'll inquire."

"Tell Miss Ethgrete Mr. Cready can't wait long,"—and

the manager's eyes gave out sparks. He began pacing again, holding his watch on his outspread palm. Down the corridor receded the pit-pat of the nurse's felt shoes, and a sickly odor of iodoform seemed to sweat from the walls.

"Well?" sharpened Cready some ten minutes later. The nurse was back, as impassive as when she went.

"He won't live, sir. They expect him to get through—I beg your pardon, a professional term—pass away about four A. M. to-morrow."

"But the girl—where is she? Great God! I can't stay here all day."

"I gave her your message. It took some time. She knows he's dying and she can't seem to understand when you speak to her. But she'll come, I dare say."

"Yes, I dare say she will," snarled Cready, showing his teeth. Uninterested, the nurse looked over her shoulder down the corridor.

"She's coming," she answered. And like an automaton she turned away.

Now Cready knew the artistic nature. He had played on it for some twenty years and made money on it. So he composed his face, took off his hat, and put on that indefinable expression of official mourning that people wear for others. "This is too bad—too bad," he murmured, searching for a more adequate expression, when just then Tony came through the doorway like Grief walking. Cready and she met face to face in the center of the waiting-room. The condolences he had prepared, the persuasion, and the threats, ebbed from his memory, and he stood at a loss, not knowing what to say.

Perhaps every hospital is haunted by the dead who have ended there in pain, and it may be that one of these poor ghosts rushed past Tony as she walked all night through the halls between the closed doors of the sick. Her eyes, strained open, stared at Cready without a spark of recogni-

tion, as though some horror had flitted before the pupils and the lids could never shut in rest again. As he looked at her, the manager grew cold. "My God, she won't leave here till the breath's out of his body," he thought. "Poor kid, she looks like she's been through hell." And in spite of his irritation, his panic, he felt a twinge of compassion, for Cready was kind at heart.

"Friend's come a cropper?—Nasty business. There, there, sit down—there's a good girl." He had taken her by the arm to lead her to the bench that lined the further wall. Dumbly she let him guide her. As she sat, her hand, twitching piteously, slipped through his and fell at her side among the folds of her dress.

"Now, see here, Tony, cheero, old girl. You're making too much of this—this upset. Before the week's over he'll be as right as rain, I dare say. Why, the nurse has just told me——" He faltered and his lips refused to pronounce the lie. Her eyes, smoldering with reproach, stern as an archangel's, confused him. Abashed, he looked away towards the center table where his hat lay.

"Of course," said he, "I didn't take Mr. Felton's letter about chucking the part as gospel. Oh, I know right enough you've had a shock and you're nervy, like every artist. But you won't let the chance of your life slip by—not you." Cready still kept staring at his hat. "Besides, I'm too good a pal of yours," with a nervous laugh. "You'd never put me in such a devil of a hole." Another pause. Somewhere in the hall an electric bell kept up an imperious summons. "Felton, the fellow on the *Times*, and other big men were at the dress rehearsal. All say you're likely to come out top hole to-night—make a hit.—God, why doesn't some one answer that bell?—Sporting chances aren't much in my line, but, Lord, I wish I had some money on you. By this time to-morrow there'll be a name the more in 'Who's Who on the Stage.'" He nerved himself to look at her with an ex-

hilarating smile. She was staring past him, her face, habitually as quick as a glass to reflect the smiles of others, set in a stubborn, numb despair. Halfway down her cheek shimmered a tear—a tear so big, so brilliant, as to seem like something precious.

Cready touched her on the shoulder. “You can count the West End emotional actresses on one hand. We could do with one more. By to-morrow, come this hour——”

“He is dying—my friend is dying.”

“Well, if he is, what’s the use of your footling around here—you can’t save him—you’re not God Almighty, I suppose. Why should you do for yourself because he’s already done for?”

“I want to go to him now—let me go back to him.”

“Not till I know just where I stand, young lady.” And Cready seized Tony by the wrist. Under his fingers her pulse leapt like the heart in the breast of a bird. “You’re taking French leave the night of a new production, are you?”

“My friend is dying—I keep telling you he’s dying.”

“Right oh, he’s dying then,” agreed Cready, goaded beyond endurance. “Have it your own way. But you’re under contract to me and don’t you forget it. I can have the law out of you for this.”

The law never yet frightened a woman wrestling with Death for the being dearest to her. “I am willing David away from the grave,” Tony kept saying to herself; and, in the egoism of love, she strained past Cready, dumb to him. She breathed deeply, as though she meant to keep more than herself alive. Her face showed a painful concentration, another expression as well—an acute expression, alien to her—a look of animal slyness it was—the instinctive cunning of the fox. She crouched like a badgered creature, planning to escape.

Cready clenched her wrist as in a vise. “That’s right,

my fine young lady. I'm only the wind blowing—don't trouble to listen to me," he was growling between his teeth, when Tony, with a supple, treacherous movement of her arm, freed her hand from his, started to her feet, and made for the door. "Doctor?" Cready heard her cry in a pleading voice, and following, he found her in the hall, holding a surgeon by the sleeve of his long linen coat. She was looking up at the physician with a smile at once wheedling and deprecatory, as though the life she asked for lay at the mercy of this stolid-faced practitioner, this carver of men.

Cready laid a dominating hand on her shoulder and turned her about face to face with him. "I'm going to count three," he said. "Before I finish, I want my answer. If you'll keep your word, say Yes; if you'll break it, say No. One . . . two . . ."

"Mr. Cready," Tony began, stammering like a child reciting, "you've been kind to me and I'm not treating you fairly. I can't act to-night. If I came to the theater, my body only would come. What speaks—cries—in me when I play, would be here. Cready, don't look at me so. The understudy's good—I saw her. Fine I thought her. Besides, it's an actress-proof part."

The flesh under Cready's eyes twitched, puckered up, and for an instant creased over his eyeballs. "Just so—*egg-sactly*." He took his hand from Tony's shoulder. "In the morning, Miss Ethgrete, you'll hear from my solicitor." And without losing a moment, he turned back to the waiting-room to get his hat. Passing out through the vestibule he swore, "I'd rather drive a herd of pigs—I'd sooner stop a strike—than manage one artist. When the artist is a man, it's hard—blasted hard; when he's a woman, it's harder; but when he's an American woman, it's damned difficult." And the manager came out onto the pavement, breathing with a noise like a dredge. "If the fellow could only die

before eight P.M., she'd leave him then—she'd be all on edge and give a top-hole show." And Cready set his teeth in a black cigar, bit the end off viciously, spat, strode on a few steps, and grew calmer.

With the optimism characteristic of stage folk, he began to see the better side of the situation. "After all," he thought, "her backing out makes me a heavy salary to the good. Forty pounds a week was considerable to pay a twang-voiced Yankee. Hang it all, why did I ever choose her when I could have had an English girl for the part? No American miss shall get the better of me. Ethgrete or no Ethgrete, I ring up to-night 8.30 sharp. I'll put the understudy on, and if she weathers the press, I'll boom her. She shall advertise in every newspaper in the kingdom for her jewels, or her Pomeranian, or whatever she blank pleases, at my expense." And Cready set in to bully fortune, to bluff defeat out of face. "These rotten, nervy *pros*, they've no stamina—go to pieces—have the pip. I thought this Tony was made of better stuff. I've always liked the girl. She looks you square in the eyes." And Cready, who mistook the relations between Tony and David, went on to philosophize. "But, pshaw! these actresses are all one when the man comes along. If they lived straight, they couldn't act, I suppose, and have their tantrums in public. What a life for a woman! Thank God my girls took to suffrage and not to the stage." The manager grew gentler as he thought of his family. "How thin she'd gone in the face," he said to himself. "I could see what sort of an old woman she'd make. No, no, I won't sue her." And to excuse his soft-heartedness, he added, "It's too risky. I probably couldn't make a penny out of her. Best leave her be. These Yankees are a slippery people."



## CHAPTER XXVII

MONDAY, Tuesday, passed, and David still lay rigid, nearer to death than to life. Tony had seen him once. His eyes were open then, stretched wide, staring to look back on his life—on all he had lost, and when Tony tried to come to him, the nurse stopped her, led her away, told her his people had been telegraphed.

On Wednesday, as Tony crouched in the waiting-room, hardly daring to breathe, as though David's life was flickering close to her in the dusk, the surgeon spoke to her. "Your friend will pull through," he said. Then Tony knew that God hears our prayers.

Every day now Lord Finister, Hearn's father, Lady Finister, his sisters, and such of his brothers as weren't at the Durbar or in the Soudan, or in some other of what the English call "Our Eastern Possessions," mustered and bore down on the Midland Infirmary in limousines, taxis, hansom, from every corner of the city. Tony watched them file in at the door. They would all hold out two fingers to the doctor and murmur, "Haw! Such an accident—fancy!" A tiresome progeny they were, male and female all the same shape. From the Finister pattern David only had differed. There was no place for Tony in the sick-room now. Whenever she peeked in at the door there was always a posse of relatives standing like a screen about Hearn's bed, so she contented herself by sitting in the waiting-room, and now that anxiety was at an end she sucked toffy and cracked nuts, and read all the theatrical papers.

The Prettier Sister had proved a success—a sensational success—the success of the season. For once the critics were

agreed; they forgot to carp, moved by the beauty of the play; they were touched, these cynics, by the heroine's simplicity, and Tony's understudy spoke herself into fame in a night. The newspapers ignored Tony. The very critics who had been the loudest in praise of her performance in the charity *matinée* never even accounted for her non-appearance in *The Prettier Sister*, but trumpeted the talents of her understudy. Only *The Morning Post* regretted "that so brilliant an artist as Miss Ethgrete had been prevented from presenting," etc. The article written by Felton went on in this strain for several paragraphs.

"Well, the girl's had her chance and made good," thought Tony, "and I wouldn't have it different—indeed, I wouldn't." Nor would she, in common stage humanity. But for all this the ex-principal was a little sad. Indeed, she would have been a saint and not an actress if she hadn't felt hurt at being herself so entirely forgotten. Two days ago, when David's life hung in the balance, every chorus girl might have starred and all the theaters gone to perdition—Tony would not have cared or known. But now that he was safe, her work gripped her. She brooded over the enthusiastic headlines that might have spelt her name, and prayed her chance might come again. Cready gave no sign of life. He was too overjoyed by the success of the play to think of badgering Tony. With the superstition of his kind he probably felt that fate had intervened and changed his cast all for the best.

"He's a clever man, Cready," Felton said one afternoon, when he was visiting Tony, for, generous friend that he was, he came to see her often now and cheered her in her hour of professional mortification. "But I sometimes think he lacks the finer perceptions. He doesn't know, or perhaps he won't admit, how much better you were in the part." Tony was touched—in fact, tears came to her eyes. "Have a bun," said she, expansively. It was tea-time.

And when she had helped him, she took a big cake herself, for among her other genial qualities, Tony had the charm of a good appetite.

She was living at home again, or what she called home. She had gone back to Mrs. Bulsome Potter's lodgings, and often wandered disconsolate in Hearn's forsaken studio. She wasn't overgay. In the first place, she felt lonely, and whether it was her work or David she missed most she could never have told you. Mrs. Bulsome Potter had given Hearn up from the first. In vain did Tony declare that David was out of danger. The landlady only sighed and clucked and wagged her mortuary head. "I must see about movin' his things out of the studio," she would say. "Pore young man—I've 'ardly the 'eart to do it, but I'll 'ave the room on me 'ands, I dessay, and must look about me for a new lodger. But mournin' I will wear."

Tony, however, was made of cheerier stuff—concentrated optimism from head to foot. The world had need of David and would get him back—she never feared it. Not that he wasn't very weak still. He spoke in a breath. The first time after his illness that he looked at Tony and recognized her she experienced a happiness so poignant, so suffocating, as to cause her, with the inconsequence of her sex, to start in and sob. They were alone when he opened his eyes. He showed no surprise at seeing her beside him. "You will not go away," he said. His voice was so without inflection, so unearthly, as to make the question sound like a prophecy. "Oh, David," said Tony, which meant, "I'm in the world at present for nothing else but to take care of you." And he shut his eyes again, reassured.

She would come early in the morning while the charwomen were still scrubbing the stairs, and all day, except when she lunched, or when David's people came—they came less often now—she took care of him. She was a good nurse. Her fondness for him made her deft and wise.

He wasn't overgrateful; fretful with pain, wild with nerves, he got to associate her with his tiresome illness. He seemed to prefer the hospital attendant to her. He wouldn't have Tony touch him. "For God's sake go and have some rest," he would say to her peevishly. "I shall never get well if you sit there watching me." But just when she took him at his word and rose to go, in the same breath he would reproach her. Of course, she had her precious Art to attend to—was it Cready or Harris, of the Haymarket, she was about to interview? Well, if she ever chose to come back, she would probably find him lying here still. Then all at once a disconcerting change would come over him. He would turn gentle, appealing, and plead with her not to leave him.

Towards evening he always grew calmer and fell asleep. Once his restless, feverish-looking eyes were shut, his head assumed a heroic cast—something splendid showed in his face. It was then Tony felt she loved him very much. The trained nurse coming into the room would find her watching beside David as he slept, as quiet as the young man himself. One night, "He'll have a fine wife in you," said the woman, who scented a romance. But Tony explained in a whisper that she meant to be a great actress and never trouble with any such cares.

David's family were mystified by always finding Tony at the patient's bedside. At first they took her for an Italian model, and they thought her quaint and devoted. But when they understood she was an actress, they decided she was a scheming, a nefarious creature. Tony took a prejudice to these people. They were so assured, so blatantly casual; and they found her not at all to their taste. They dared not ignore her, however, for David had presented her to them in a meaningful manner, as though to say, "What I like must be respected." And sitting up in bed he made a little speech, in which he told his family that Tony was the nicest girl in the world, and other things equally complimentary, which

made her blush and look down at her boots. Then Hearn's relatives bowed as limberly as they could and said, "Indeed!", "Fancy!", "Haw!", "Really!" But all through the interview not a smile would Tony vouchsafe. She sulked at the foot of the bed, looking as dark as a Corsican brooding over a vendetta; and when the visitors were gone, she tossed her mane like a desperate bandit. She was jealous, as many a better woman has been. You see, she had never known any one but herself seem familiar with David, and oh, to hear those girls with hair-nets call him "Foor old Davy!" It hurt her.

"Davy!" That must have been his name when he was a boy. Why had he never told her? How little she knew about him really. Well, she would never call him Davy. It didn't suit him. She didn't like it. Yes, the days when his family came to see David were bitter days for Tony. She went about those mornings with a peaked little face like a disgruntled elf, and when one of his own people, carrying high an aquiline, semi-translucent nose, swept in and claimed him, she trotted off disconsolate. These relatives had the prior right, no doubt, but there was something almost ironical in the way their sables trailed beside the sick-bed. Luxury coquetting with pain. Tony couldn't even bring herself to like the flowers David's "people" brought him—proud, long-stemmed roses, whose perfume struggled with the odor of medicaments, just as a wanton woman fights decay.

Now that David was stronger, Tony went often to visit Sister Mary Magdalene at the Convent of the Assumption. The nun was at her wits' end, for she declared it seemed as though all the diseases in London were flocking on this pilgrimage. The Sisters of the Assumption, even with the help of the Dames Hospitalières and the aid of the pilgrims that had come over from France to care for the sick, could hardly attend to or find room for all this misery that rushed to them.

Tony, too, had anxieties. She was short of money. Like St. Martin, she would have given the cloak off her back. She had hoped to draw a big salary in The Prettier Sister and had launched out into all manner of philanthropic schemes. She had built Mrs. Pott's bathroom, she had subscribed royally to the Anti-vivisection League, she had overfed some twenty beggars. There was no one to guide her in financial matters. David counted money as dross. Tony, however, never counted it at all. "Why, I've only four shillings left," said she. "Why, how very funny!" which, no doubt, it was if you looked at it in that light. It was midnight in Gluckstein's back parlor, when Tony made this discovery. She was playing nap for a ha'penny a point with Mondragonie. The bride and groom were just back from their honeymoon. Mr. Gluckstein offered to introduce Tony to a friend of his whose mystic symbol was the three golden balls. He would even have lent her something himself on interest, knowing her income was sure. But she thanked him and said she would hold out a bit longer. Some five days later her money came from home and she took her watch and her gold cross out of pawn. She was a little ashamed of having parted with them, even for a while, and hoped her father would never know. She instantly launched out in more wild charities. She never bought herself a stitch of summer clothes, but went about as *insouciant*e as Happy Hooligan, in the shabbiest suit. During his convalescence David discovered through some inadvertent speech of Tony's the straits she had been in. He was very angry that he hadn't known before. He told her she was a silly, old-fashioned thing who wouldn't take money from a man friend, and not an emancipated woman at all. Tony didn't resent his crossness. It only went to prove that he was getting better.

The first consecutive conversation they had together was one afternoon Felton had paid Hearn a visit. Tony found



David sitting up in bed, shaved, his hair neatly brushed, looking at himself in a hand-glass.

"I had no idea I was so ugly," he said to Tony. "I'm amazed that I've ever had the courage to talk of love to any woman, and I'm even more astonished that any woman ever had the courage to listen to me. With what a brazen assurance Providence endows the male in full health."

"Well, you look much better, David dear, when you're fit and fat and have your collar on."

"You flatter me," and David stared at her sulkily over the hand-glass. "You've been awfully decent," he went on, still scowling at her. "Felton told me about The Prettier Sister. Do you know, I'm such an egoist I didn't even wonder how you managed to get away from the theater."

"Oh, rubbish!" said Tony, ducking her head.

"Thank you very much and all that," David concluded ceremoniously. A disconcerting habit of Hearn's was to suddenly assume a great deal of manner. Nothing made Tony so uncomfortable as David's politeness. It mystified her. When he was rude he was on a par with her, but when courteous, he was a sphinx, an enigmatic, a disturbing presence.

It took David, a patient who wanted to walk before he could sit up in bed, and fashion a monument before he could step, some twenty days till he was able to move about his room, leaning on the nurse's arm and Tony's. During his sojourn at the hospital he had managed to offend the surgeon, who threatened to give up the case till Tony intervened. Three times Hearn insulted his nurse and each time apologized so nobly as to secure the woman for a friend for life. He was ungrateful, rude to Tony as regularly as she blew in; and then, just as she turned to blow out again, he would appeal to her in a manner so caressing, so helpless as to melt a gorgon. She couldn't be long angry

with him. She lost all resentment; all petty feeling went from her once she was with her friend.

Yes, she loved him—to herself she admitted it. "If I'm ever to do anything in the world," she thought, "I must leave him and make no more bones about it." Indeed, professionally she was going to rack. Now in June and July was the time to visit the managers with a view to the next winter's work. Tony, by leaving Cready in the lurch, had hurt her reputation. Now was the moment for her to retrieve her name by procuring a brilliant engagement for the autumn. "Harris of the Haymarket is producing—he may have something for me—I'll go to him to-morrow;" she promised herself this every night as she buttoned her coat preparatory to trudging home. But just as she was tip-toeing from the room, David, starting out of a doze, would call to her, "Tony, you will come to-morrow?" And she would answer, "Why—yes, of course; yes, David dear." And she would go away, shutting the door very gently for fear of disturbing him.

Outside the streets swarmed with people ravenous for pleasure, the night crowd of any big city. As Tony passed through the Strand she loitered round the theaters and read the play-bills. The names of the principal actresses flamed on the frontals. Tony knew many of these girls. Some were her contemporaries. All were getting ahead of her in the pitiless race. "How weak I am," she thought. "What a coward!" And her conscience hurt her all the way home.

One night David fell asleep earlier than usual and Tony crept away to King George's Theater. She bought a ticket for the gallery and saw the last act of *The Prettier Sister*. She suffered cruelly. She had put her whole soul into this play. She had created the woman's part out of her own flesh and tears, and now she saw a mimicry of herself, a copy of her voice and gestures parading the stage. The people about her clapped and bravoed. But Tony knew it was only

a ghost they were applauding. The woman she had made and loved had been murdered by this understudy, had been done away with.

Well, however hollow the theater proved, Tony had given to it all she had. She must only cling to her work the more—hold on to it with a desperate tenacity.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

As for David, since the day he had kissed Tony, since her mouth, trembling with ignorance and love, had answered the pressure of his, this girl was become his obsession. To feel her getting such root in his life he took fright, tried to harden his heart to her. When she bent over him now, he watched her with a cruel attention. Seen close to, her face already showed the stigma of the theater. The long eyelashes were slightly scorched by the nightly application of hot charcoal. The pure skin was a little roughened by the stress of making up. He noticed all these signs of wear with relief, for they seemed somehow to weaken the power of this unconscious and devoted creature. His vanity, too, spoke. He regretted her having known him weak, querulous, affectionate as a child. He feared the humdrum of convalescence. Better estrange her definitely, better never see her again, than have her day by day get to know him better, perhaps cease to care for him. Besides, he wanted her all or not at all. The situation was untenable and must come to an end. Better rip her out of his life than continue to pass for her friend, than to see her every day in this torturing intimacy.

One morning—he was just beginning to creep about his room—a letter was brought him. When he had read it he knew he held a weapon that could wound her mortally. He wanted to hurt her. Why? Is it that quarreling is a form of intimacy—that in abusing what we love we stamp it as our own—we possess it after a brutal, unsatisfactory fashion? The interchange of harsh words, no less than a kiss, is a coupling of primitive instinct. One cannot say “I hate you” without being familiar. Familiarity is a sort

of fusion, and fusion is what love will have. Love makes itself felt, if not by caresses, why then by spite, by sarcasm, by tears, by obstinate silences, by all the methods of Adam, by all the wiles of Eve.

The next morning, when Tony knocked at David's door, he came to open it for her himself. There he stood in his corded dressing-gown, like a lean, broad-shouldered young monk. To see him erect and thrilling with life again she experienced, for all her thankfulness, a sense of loss. So a mother must feel when she finds her child grown old enough to take care of himself.

"Why, you'll soon be at work again," she said, slinging her hat at the table.

He glanced at his left arm that still hung in a sling. "As soon as I can use this flapper," he answered, and moved restlessly away from her. "Harris, the manager of the Haymarket, has accepted my play," abruptly he told her, "The Crest of the Wave, you know, that Eglantine bashed at Webster's." He spoke with his back turned to her, absorbed apparently in filing some papers on his desk. "It will be produced in October."

"Why, I didn't know you'd sent it to Harris? But good! I am glad! That's luck for both of us. You've suggested me for the slave Tullia?"

"No."

"But of course you're going to."

"No. I'm not."

"Why, didn't you like me in the part?" she asked, her lower lip beginning to tremble.

"I liked you very much."

"Perhaps Harris has stipulated for some star to play?"

"No, it's not that."

"Then, David, why——"

"I'll tell you why," he answered, facing about. "I never mean to raise a finger to help you on with the stage."

She was bewildered—above all, hurt—to think that her brother artist, her patient, her friend, should say this to her.

“Tony, I can’t help you on with this life that keeps us apart. Tony, you *must* marry me!”

She shriveled away from him into the nearest chair and waited, nibbling her lower lip as though she meant to cry in a moment.

“I’ve sent that play to other managers,” he told her brutally. “It’s knocked about from theater to theater, and I never mentioned you for the part.”

“I can’t understand you,” she protested, her American accent ringing in her voice, as always when she was moved. “Why, it’s as though I knew of some one looking for a sculptor and never told you. No, I can’t understand you, David.”

“You needn’t tell me that,” he answered in a hard voice. “You’ve proved it to me with your blunders, your tactlessness.”

“David!”

“Yes, yes, I know what you’re going to say. You’re going to tell me how you’ve helped me back to life, how you’ve lost your London chance for me.”

“I’m going to tell you to be quiet, to lie down, and keep still.”

“Well, I’ll tell you what you’ve done for me. You’ve tortured me, that’s what you’ve done——”

“I’ll call the nurse and order her to put you to bed—I won’t listen to you.”

“Take your fingers out of your ears, Tony.” He seized hold of her arms to draw down her hands, and as he touched her his rough anger ebbed. “I wish I had never met you,” he said. “My life’s been hell since I’ve known you.”

“David dear, behave like a reasonable being. Whatever’s happened since yesterday—what’s changed you?”

“I’m only getting better, I suppose. I’m strong enough



to speak out. I've lain here all these weeks and suffered like the damned, watching you. I've seen you with the medicine bottle in your hand stop to think of your own wretched business, the stage. Why, when you sat up at night with me, you read the theatrical papers. Yes, even when you turned my pillows you were regretting——"

"David, take care. You'll say something I can't forgive."

"Better so. I want to be done with all this. I want to be done with you. I've suffered too much through you. I try to get at you, I can't; the stage comes in the way. You belong to the stage. You're married to it. It possesses you. Well, I'm jealous of it, I hate it, and I won't share with it."

"Why, David, why should we always be miserable nowadays when we're together? We're no longer lovers."

"Oh, you don't know what it is to care for any one as I care for you and never be first with them. For me the stage is like another man in your life."

"You have your work, too, David. There are thoughts of yours I can never reach."

"A man's different; he must make his art—his profession, first——"

"Ah, there we have it. Because I'm a woman you won't admit my claims to think and work. You love me, you say. But does your love entitle you to take away my rights—the rights I have as a human being?"

"Bravo, Ibsen's Nora!"

"There, you see, I too try to get at you, David, but you sneer and turn what I say aside. No, we won't be lovers, we can't be friends, we must be done with each other." She caught up her hat and went blindly to the door.

"We ought not to have known each other," said David in a stupid monotone.

"No, I don't wish that. The only parts of my life I'd live over are bits here and there with you."

"Tony, if I were to write to you, would you answer me?"

"I mean not to, David."

"Somehow," he said, "I feel that I shall never speak with you again." And for a moment they swayed towards each other, as though groping to hold together.

"Tony, I shall miss you."

"And we shall always think kindly of one another, sha'n't we, David? By that I mean we've some good moments to remember."

"No doubt—no doubt. Won't you let me kiss you good-by, Tony, for it is good-by in a way, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is, in a way." And gravely, like a child, she lifted up her face to his.

He kissed her cheek. "How cold you are!" he said. "You've been crying."

"I want you to be successful, David, and happy. Good-by, David, good-by." And her hands slipped out of his, chilly, trembling.

It was as piteous a good-by as one human being ever said to another, piteous because so unnecessary, so wasteful of happiness. In life such farewells are common enough. They are without climax or dramatic value. Half an hour's common-sense talk would put all right. The vanity of love speaks in these partings; the dregs of the heart, as it were, come to the surface. Misapprehension, pride, urge a definite rupture, a renunciation; the impenetrability of the other's motives and mind is a factor; above all, that sexual enmity which is the root of passion.

Outside the house of pain the day was as sweet and bright as though separations between those who love each other never were. All the window-boxes were in full bloom. At the street corner Tony looked back. Over each window a holland curtain was drawn, like a yellow cataract, veiling the hospital's every eye. The great building stood blind and irresponsible. "Perhaps, after all," thought Tony, "he isn't so very fond of me."

The pitiful groping of human affection. How can we ever learn just how dear we are to the being who is everything to us?

"What a waste of love goes on in the world," thought Tony. "No, I shall only think of him just now and then, quite casually. After all, I lived very happily for twenty years before I knew him. Now that I do know him, why shouldn't I live very happily for at least fifty more?" And Tony remembered all day not to think of David, which was just another way of thinking of him all the time. The same morning to Sister Mary Magdalene Tony said, "Would you let me come with you to Lourdes, my Sister? I'll help you any way I can. I can't look for work till the autumn and I've all August to get through." And, indeed, her vista of days frightened her, all emptiness.

"And why not?" cried the old nun. "Does your theater prevent you? Not so. We know that the Juggler of Notre Dame was full of good works."

"Well, it's not so much the good works I'm thinking of. You see, it's this. There's no one on earth I'd rather be with just now than you, my Sister."

And so it was that Tony came to be enlisted in the great pilgrimage to Lourdes, and a very cheery, helpful pilgrim she was. If her methods of waiting on the sick were original, they were none the less efficient. With that, she was tender, intuitive, alive to suffering, and strong as a little ox. She soon learnt to wait without disgust on disease, quite naturally, just as the angels must go about their business. Oh, if Mr. Oscar Meredith had seen his daughter now, in a charwoman's apron, serving the poor!

Now when Tony suggested to Pickwick that during her visit to Lourdes he might pass a vivifying week or so at the Villa Sub Rosa, that cryptic animal listened with a petrified face, nor could all her explanations, all her excuses, melt

his stony, gorgon-like stare of reproach. In the taxi, on the way to the Villa Sub Rosa, Tony positively confounded herself in protestations of regret. All to no purpose. Pickwick wobbled on the back seat with a pursed-up countenance suggestive of snuffy resentment, for the little dog always knew when he was about to be parted from his mistress. He had second sight where his meals or his canine affections were threatened.

At the Villa Sub Rosa all were from home with the exception of Mrs. Potts, who, it was to be feared, from the effusiveness of her greeting, had uncorked the brown bottle more than once that day.

"Mrs. Potts," said Tony, "would you allow Samuel to pass a few weeks with you as a paying guest?"

Mrs. Potts, all asthma and genial gin, agreed, said much that was flattering of Pickwick, and shook him by the paw. So seen, hand in hand, face to face, with their double chins and pompous contours, Tony decided that Samuel Pickwick and Mrs. Potts were as like as twins.

"Then it's a pilgrim you're to be, dearie, is it?" lisped Mrs. Potts. "Well, I dessay pilgrims is grown classy enough, what with the easy travelin' and no peas in their shoes." It was on the veranda where the sun was streaming obliquely that this conversation took place. A bird fluttered in the hedge, and Pickwick went toward the ripple in the foliage, lolloping.

"I'll go now while he's busy," whispered Tony. "I always do so hate saying good-by to him." And she clasped Mrs. Potts, that Victorian bacchanal, by the hand and sped away running.

## CHAPTER XXIX

ON the days of August 7th and 8th, when the great pilgrimage to Lourdes sets out from Charing Cross, that highly Anglican station hardly knows itself. The roof echoes to the Ave Maris Stella, the platform swarms with priests, and the sick are laid beside the track. It was here that Felton, coming to say good-by to Tony, found her, the red flannel cross of the pilgrimage pinned askew on her blouse.

When she saw him, "He has some message from David," she thought. As she ran to him her heart gave a double knock. She clung to him, and, like the little bohemian she was, she kissed him on both cheeks soundly. But no, he never spoke of Hearn, nor dared she ask him about her former friend, and just then a sister of charity calling her, she had to leave Felton. As the traveling hospital shuddered out of the station she leant through the window to try to tell him good-by. Her eyes shone on him caressingly, her hair lapped her forehead, her face dwindled into a white blotch, a speck, and was lost for him.

As she journeyed from London, with every turn of the wheels Tony grew sadder, and all at once her life appeared to her intolerably empty, as though her body were traveling away from her heart, while in the clattering train went up the adoring cry of the pilgrims, the Pater, the Credo, the Laudate Laudate Mariam, the Magnificat, and the Hymn of Bernardette.

When on the following day (this Calvary of a journey lasted two days and a night) the train halted for an hour at Cambo, the sick were drawn out into the light onto the platform. The tourists in the station, the occupants of other trains

bound for the Pyrenees summer resorts, stood aghast before this ambulant hospital. The pool of Beersheba never reflected more fearful things than come praying to Lourdes.

Tony, running on errands for Sister Mary Magdalene, collided with a very dressy gentleman who was tripping through the soot as lightly as Pavlovna. With a little cry she stopped; but so intent was he in keeping his russet boots uncontaminated, that he swept by murmuring, "A thousand pardons, Madame."

"Father!"

Mr. Meredith came to a standstill and rolled towards the speaker his cold blue eye. "Antoinette, my poor child! How—négligée you look. Forgive me, but you're quite the *femme de chambre*."

"Say housemaid, Father, and be done with it," cried Tony cheerfully.

"I prefer *femme de chambre*. The expression gives more the note I mean. You're a little bohemian, eh, Antoinette? A little—what shall I say?—temperamental looking for an English domestic." And they stood side by side, smiling uncomfortably, like two strangers. The crowd jostled them together, and they kept murmuring, "I beg your pardon," "Sorry, Father."

"Well, I must say I never saw you looking better, Father, and isn't your hat lovely!" exclaimed Tony, in unfeigned admiration. "You're as splendid as what's-its-name—the thing that's so dressy and has all the wives?—a sultan."

"No, no, you exaggerate," protested Oscar graciously. "A tourist, an ardent sight-seer, if you will,—a traveler *en amateur*." And on the chilly beauty of his classic brow Mr. Meredith balanced the dearest, sweetest little Tyrolean hat with a bunch of edelweiss in the band. "At my time of life, Antoinette, a man has other things to think of than elegancies of dress," whispered Oscar with a plaintive sweet-



ness, and he peeked in a mirror set on a chocolate slot machine, and straightened his tie. "In three hours I shall be at Biarritz, combating my hereditary enemy, the gout. Vichy did not prove salutary." It was characteristic of Mr. Meredith that he expressed no surprise on meeting his daughter—whom he supposed, if he thought about her at all, to be in London—in a French railway station, and it never occurred to him to ask her whither she was bound.

"Is step-mother with you? I should like to see step-mother."

"Follow me." Oscar executed a jaunty *volte face* and vanished into a neighboring first-class carriage. "Come in—pray come in," he murmured condescendingly, through the window. But Tony remained on the footboard, her curly, wilful head thrust into the compartment, peeking into the train like an elf.

"Oscar, what is it? Who is it? It is—no, it isn't—yes, it is!" Mrs. Meredith was all of a flutter. In the intervening years she had grown stout. There she sat, a living monument to modern comfort, and if so vulgar an expression may be applied to an essentially well-bred woman, she seemed to sweat prosperity, succulent living, from every pore. She held out a little hand in the neatest of gloves—such a little hand it was compared with the generous bosom, the majestic double chin—and she kissed her step-daughter on both cheeks after the Continental fashion. "You're really unaltered, Antoinette!" exclaimed the good lady, in undisguised astonishment, and her hand in Tony's felt as soft as a marshmallow. "You look as I never hoped to see you again—as you looked in the past, doesn't she, Oscar? A gentle, sweet young thing. Oscar, with her here before my eyes, I can't seem to believe that she paints her face every night except Sundays like a poor fallen—Oscar, I don't know what word to use."

"You mean a woman of an easy virtue, Muriel."

"Turn to the light, Antoinette dear. Do you know, it strikes me you're paler and thinner. What do you think, Oscar?"

"It may be due to the fact that my own health is dwindling, but to me she looked browner and fatter."

"Well, I weigh more," observed Tony. And a misplaced silence ensued, the oppressive silence peculiar to those family groups that are held together not by sympathy, but by the paralyzing bonds of relationship.

"Speaking of *avoirdufois*," volunteered Oscar, in that startling whisper of his. "Look at my wife, Antoinette; look at her well."

"She's a bit fatter," confessed Tony, "not but what it isn't becoming."

"I'm over-stout, Antoinette."

"My wife is obese," assured Oscar, in the voice of one who has a grievance.

"And what a slip of a thing I used to be," chirps the poor lady, with a guilty playfulness. Really, in the reproachful silence that followed, Tony felt quite sorry for her.

"But why are you not at your post, your vantage ground? At King George's Theater, in short?" queried Oscar, making a nest for himself out of some cushions and rugs. "Come, come; is this right, Antoinette? Should you not be perfecting yourself in your elusive art?"

Tony, with her arms crossed on the window-sill, her Tam cocked on the back of her head like a brigand's, gave an account of the circumstances that had intervened between herself and her London engagement; also she told her parents how now she was bound for Lourdes.

"I confess, Muriel," tittered Oscar, with a labored flippancy, "I hardly see our buoyant Antoinette in the light of a trained nurse, dropping medicine and smoothing the fevered pillow—eh, Muriel?"

"Your traveling companions have nothing catching, An-

toinette dear, have they?" asks Mrs. Meredith, with a pathetic droop of her mouth. "For if not, I was going to suggest that you leave them for the time being and share our compartment as far as Biarritz. We could travel on together quite nice and cozy." And the good lady smiled, while a resemblance to her former self floated uncertainly on the rising billows of her cheeks. "I'm sure Oscar doesn't object; do you, dear?"

"Object? You ask jocosely, I presume. I am a father, Muriel. But possibly your seat, Antoinette, is already engaged."

"Yes, third-class; and besides, I'm in a pilgrim train."

"Ah!" It was a cry from the heart. Not only Oscar's affronted snobbism spoke—no, it was a sound of horror that burst from him, as though he had come face to face with something abnormal, beyond the bounds of credibility, fantastic, phantasmagoric.

"If it's a question of money, dear," hazarded Mrs. Meredith, fanning herself nervously, "you know how gladly your father——"

"Whatever should I want more money for?" snorts Tony, in cheerful content. "I have enough to pay every night for one bed, and I can't sleep in any more than one. I have three meals—no, four, counting my tea—a day; and if I do travel third-class, I get where I'm going just as quickly, just as safely and, for all that, just as comfortably, and looking just as clean, as though I'd traveled first. No, when one's got work to do, more money than one needs is nothing but a nuisance."

"I suppose it's the artistic temperament makes you carry on so," murmured Mrs. Meredith indulgently, and in spite of herself her eye wandered over Tony's shabby jacket and outrageously dilapidated Tam. Another awkward silence ensued; for what can a first-class passenger possibly say to

a third-class passenger? Surely two such races can have nothing in common; their very blood must flow in an opposite fashion.

"Your last days in London were full of farewell visits and p.p.c. cards?" suggested Mrs. Meredith, and she fanned herself, while on her bracelet a trinket, a crystal ball, a pretty, useless toy, bobbed at her wrist like an iridescent bubble.

"There was only one friend that it hurt me to leave," Tony gravely answered. "But when I said good-by to that friend it nearly broke my heart."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Meredith, and she swiveled her eye uneasily towards Mr. Meredith.

"And then, of course, there was Samuel," Tony reminisced. "It was rather a wrench leaving Samuel."

"Samuel?" asked Mrs. Meredith suspiciously. "Who is Samuel?"

"Samuel Pickwick, of course."

"Tut, tut! Be explicit," hissed Mr. Meredith. "Rather more precision, please."

"Drab's son, Father; the little brindled bull you thought so plain." And Oscar comments, "*Still in statu quo*. Dear me! What tenacity of life these curs have, to be sure." It was then Tony felt she was among strangers indeed. Balancing on the footboard, she ransacked her brain for something more to say to this fat lady and to this fat lady's husband. In truth, she was oppressed by the luxury spread out before her—the cult of comfort displayed; the monogrammed bags, the book rests, the traveling-clock—all the elegant futilities that had gone out of her life.

"Oscar, I only hope that these persons Antoinette is traveling with haven't consumption or anything catching," Mrs. Meredith again hazarded, uncorking the smelling salts.

"Now, Muriel, don't fidget, don't begin to fuss. If the

diseases were contagious, Antoinette would have had them long ago. No, her traveling companions are no doubt suffering from an utter disregard of the laws of hygiene. I know this class well. Instead of a solid meal, they have a snack of chocolate. When they are ailing, they try some patent medicine sent them as an advertisement. Their ignorance, their bravado, would be ludicrous, if it wasn't so deplorable. Antoinette, tell your friends for me that they should eat sanguineous meats, wear finest wool only next their skin, have electric massage, or possibly mud-baths, and be under the care of a thoroughly reliable physician—under his constant supervision, in fact. Have you the *Smart Set*, Muriel?"

Mrs. Meredith undid the clasps of her expensive morocco satchel and drew forth the desired volume. From the satin folds of her reticule emanated a scent of iris, of heliotrope, the very perfume of riches, as it were; and all at once Tony understood that she was no longer in the social class of these people. No, no more than the conductor going by to take the tickets. She was a worker now. Once a man, though his education be of the best, has broken stones on the road, he is—in the eyes of the world—coarsened. Even so the mental or artistic laborer invariably loses caste.

Just then from the corridor a maid of the correct English school entered the compartment. She carried a cushion that she tucked reverentially into the small of Mrs. Meredith's back. The servant's impersonal eye rested on Tony as on the empty air. Where was that obsequious semi-smile that used to mean the one and only daughter of the house?

It is worth while no doubt to be a worker, a thinker, a sufferer; but there is something grand about these people who do nothing at all. They have a presence. The bohemian, the artist, however splendid his talent, however big his heart, is ill at ease in the company of these monarchs of well-being.

The train gave a lurch. "Well, I must be going," said Tony, and the stage equivalent of "God bless you!" burst from her as she shook hands. "Good luck!" she cried. "Good luck!" is the actor's watchword, his creed, his prayer, the best he can wish his friend, his tenderest good-by.



## CHAPTER XXX

THREE hours later the train bore down into the gorge of the Pyrenees. It was like riding into a valley of light. The crevices of the hills still seemed to hold the sun, although the luminary itself had sunk out of sight. On the left unfurled a verdant country where cows stood knee-deep in the grass, chewing as though hypnotized. On the right a forest swayed to meet the train with a gust of sweet smells, the stinging scent of pine, the woody breath of poplar.

Tony sat by the open window, facing the engine. A lock of her hair slapped her forehead in the breeze and something cool seemed to blow over her, something very fresh, cleansing, and aromatic. Her life in London was past, like a play on which the curtain has fallen, and in the vigorous mountain air she felt healed of her feverish haste to be famous.

The train halted, shuddering, at a wayside station, and a man opposite Tony, with a bandage over his ear, put his head out of the window to call to the guard. "Look," Sister Mary Magdalene was saying to a lame boy, showing him some pictures in her breviary, "this is the Little Jesus and this is His Mother." "She lives at Lourdes," the child assured. A woman next him, with a waxy face, had fallen asleep with her mouth open. Now and then she moaned, as though struggling with pain even in her sleep. Two men beyond Tony sat rigid, staring into space. Their clothes looked rotten with age. At intervals their eyelids twitched, as though sight sickened them.

Now that the train had stopped, the stifling heat made itself felt in the compartment. Whiffs of iodine mingled

with the acrid odor of perspiration—that sour smell of the poor. But what did Tony's heart good was to watch a girl whose profile was defined against the open window. A little work-girl, who sat bolt upright, inhaling the beauty of the country as though her life depended on it.

"What bird is that?" asked she. And Tony heard a trill, a quick cadence of fluty notes, the very cry of summer thrilling with a pastoral sweetness. And all at once she found herself thinking of her father and step-mother, traveling off to Biarritz among cushions and flowers, innocent of discomfort. She felt for them a heaviness of spirit—they seemed so unprepared for the inevitable. Suffering must come to them as a surprise.

At nine o'clock at night the train groaned into Lourdes to deposit its fearful cargo. Tony took lodgings with a peasant who rented a room during the pilgrimage. The window gave on a court facing the hospital of Notre Dame du Salut, where were installed Sister Mary Magdalene and her sick. Tony could call across to the nun and greet her at any hour of the day.

Every morning Tony waked with surprise to find herself in this still valley. In London, on opening her eyes, her first thought had been, "It's a new day—what can I make of it towards growing famous?" Here in the eternal hills all this hurrying, pushing, self-trumpeting seemed pitiable. In this amphitheater of nature swarming with the sick Art was a vain thing. No masterpiece of genius—Tony knew it now—ever helped a man as a litter can or a bandage. Pain finds out what is real. Because of her youth, she had not been accepted as a *dame hospitalière*, as one of the real servants of Lourdes, whose terrible prerogative it is to lower the sick into the miraculous waters. A lighter duty had been allotted her. She and some ten other young girls were portioned off to serve milk or soup to the pilgrims stationed before the Grotto.

This Grotto is a rough nest of stones where the Mother of God is believed to have appeared to a child. Here a thousand candles now shed their wax tears in the sunlight, while from rolling chairs, litters, mattresses, the sick yearn towards the Virgin that smiles, impeccable, in the grim recess of the rock.

It is the incurable, the hopeless, who come here. What the hospitals despair of, what the surgeon's knife rejects, a mother, a friend, a family brings to Our Lady of Lourdes. The poor mostly make up the pilgrimage, shabby folk who have worked, fasted, to take this journey, to give their sick one more chance. Miracle of love! For see this carcass in the litter, this thing dancing with epilepsy, twisted like a tree—it has its own people and is known amongst them by a dear name still.

The sick pray before the Grotto all day in the sun, in the rain, till their friends help them away at dusk. After dark, Lourdes, like a lower firmament, swarms with stars. From the Place du Rosaire to the Church of La Basilique the night is cleft by a zigzag of flame, a coil of permanent lightning, an apocalyptic fire. Five hundred pilgrims are inching up the hill, each holding a lighted taper. Close to every shabby breast a candle-flame flickers, pale, uncertain, like a soul that, having burst from its body, travels on ahead a few paces, trembling and aspiring in the night.

Every night before she slept Tony threw wide her window. Wisps of mist drifted past her like incense, and the sky, searchingly blue, peering between the hills, looked down into Lourdes as into a well of suffering. Here in the valley were crammed all the ills of the flesh. Yet the night retained its impeccable beauty. In the square before the church the pilgrims were praying for their sick and disease is redeemed when love watches with it. The voice of the people rose muffled, ardent, as the sacred whispers in a universal cathedral.

"No, there's no doubt of it," mused Tony, "if I hadn't gone on the stage, I should certainly have become a nun."

Tony stayed on at Lourdes. Sister Mary Magdalene had gone to Paris and had again come back with a second pilgrimage. It was now the late September, a sweet, heavy season; a tardy summer that drugged the will, troubled the senses. All along the gables the pigeons strutted, rolling a sensual eye, signaling one to the other with swelling, shimmering breasts.

Some mornings when Tony woke, particularly if the sun was strong and the earth redolent, for an instant she would believe she was cured, that her love had passed from her like a physical oppression. But just as she breathed deep and turned to convalescence, her heart began to beat in a disordered rhythm, while something in her breast kept protesting, "Why doesn't he write? I shall die if I don't hear from him." It was then she opened her venerable Shakespeare and plunged into her dear religion. But all was changed. The master dramatist taught her no stagecraft now. This Shakespeare's book was all of passion. Viola, Juliet, Helena, were poor girls like herself—all more or less unfortunately in love.

Not that Tony would have married David, even had he come to her now and asked her. She must still have said No; for her love of independence, her absorption in her work, all went to prove that she was never meant to be a wife. No, what she wanted was to be with him sometimes—to feel that she held some place in his thoughts. She could not bear to be thus cut off from him—amputated, as it were, from his life.

Can you accustom yourself to having no part in what you love? Can you resign yourself to forgetting and being forgotten? Surely no! Love worth the name is never definitely

done with. It recurs, just as hunger and sleep come back to you always.

Any day after five o'clock of the afternoon, when the service for the sick was finished, you might have seen Tony, rain or shine, stumping along the Lourdes road between the files of correct poplars. She was walking herself into content as it were, going on ahead into the kernel of the country. In the last few weeks her face had changed, and when, as now, she was by herself, her eyes acquired a habit of straining wide open, without the lids falling or the gaze shifting. This gave her a wistful look, like a little animal surprised by ill-treatment.

After a while she would leave the main road and cut across the fields into some recess in the wood. She was fond of a certain hollow among the beeches. Here the light drifted through the leaves in a green haze, a verdant drizzle, and underfoot was like the depths of an emerald. Here also was a brook, a thread of a brook; but what a talker! In Tony's opinion it kept saying, "David, David." And indeed any one who has been much in the woods alone knows that all the sounds of the country keep repeating the name of the well-beloved. She would shut her eyes, sit still, and let the earth's languor creep over her. She then divined all manner of lispings noises, shy perfumes, and with every breath of summer David would seem to come close. Her eyes opened—she felt somehow that happiness had passed this way—and every time, in delicious suspense, she went back to Lourdes, sensing a letter waiting for her. For, even if love were over between them, the intimacy of tenderness with its dear names and pulse-quickenings movements come to an end, might he not write to her still after all? Perhaps—it was probable—he didn't know where she was, but if so, why not ask Felton, or send the letter to the charge of Mrs. Bulsome Potter, or to the care of the door-keeper at King George's Theater? No, no; if David didn't

write, it was because he didn't choose to—because he was too proud to inquire where she had gone, too proud and too indifferent, unless—oh, might it be?—that he wasn't getting strong quickly. There was so much she wanted to know that any friend might long to hear: how he was, what he was doing, where he went, whom he saw. Indeed, she thought of him constantly, and neither his surly conduct nor his silence could make him less dear to her.

At times she told herself that she must be done with remembering him, that for her he was lost, gone, changed—another man; that neither his being far or near, ill or well, famous, married even, nothing of him could touch her more. And yet some of his hours, a little of his life, belonged to her. Certain moments of their intimacy she could not forget, nor he either, surely. Still, who could predict of David? Never had she understood him. His rudeness when first she knew him puzzled her still, nor could she comprehend his obstinate neglect of her, his sudden stormy tenderness. He was an enigma, all made of contradictions, moods, reticences. He had never told her that he knew it was she who had found him in the workshop and saved him from death. He knew it, of course. Felton must have told him. Several times he had seemed about to speak. Once he had seized her by both hands; he had said, "Tony—I know what I owe you—"; then suddenly he had stammered and turned away with tears in his eyes. His proud, cantankerous nature rebelled to confess such a debt.

Yes, David was incomprehensible. In that square brow of his was an unexplored world of speculations, fancies, temptations—from temple to temple, a zone unknown to Tony. Often he had looked at her furtively, as though he were thinking—of what, she wondered now. And like all lovers when absent from the being they care for, she kept asking herself, "Does he really love me? Has he ever cared for me as I care for him?" Now the strangest thing was



that though she was forever evoking his expression, reconstructing his every look, his face began to fade from her memory, to bleach like an exposed film and be lost. Sometimes the turn of the head of a stranger, his walk perhaps, some trick of speech, reminded her of David. Then she would experience an exquisite sensation, as though he himself had been near her for an instant. Her future stretched away, empty now of all but work; and yet her life had a secret flavor for all that, a taste of expectancy. She could not have told you—she hardly knew—for what she hoped; but youth is tenacious of happiness, and the letter that one post doesn't bring may come in the next.

Now with each day her grief, which had been bitter at first, altered imperceptibly. She felt she loved him enough to forgive him his unreasonable, his ungenerous conduct, to make allowances for him. "He's David," she would say. That was the excuse she found for him. And at last she wrote to him.

"MY DEAR, DEAR DAVID:

"To-day in the Rue Saint Pierre I saw a young workman leaning against the door of the house he was painting and scribbling on a bit of paper. As I went by I read what he had written. His letter began: 'Ma méchante;' then I knew he had quarreled with the girl he loves, just as you and I have quarreled, David. 'Love that can reason,' I said to myself, 'isn't love at all. Dignity and self-respect are very well in their way, but love cannot bother with all such graces. I will write to David and tell him I want to come home to my own room and take up our life together again, for David is not happy either, I know it. Our hearts are Siamese twins, and what one suffers the other must feel.'

"And then, my dearest, you are not well yet—I know it. I feel it. And who is there with you to see that you take care of yourself?—you, so careless, so obstinate. Is there no

one but a trained nurse, a starchy, officious creature, to whom you have taken one of your dislikes? And here am I with so much strength—so much health, to give you. Oh, I must come back!

“I dreamt last night we were together in the studio. The sun was streaming down through the skylight and I saw your face—your dear face that I’ve sometimes feared I should never see again. I heard your voice, just as when you used to speak to me. You had on your old work-coat and the necktie I don’t like—the unbecoming one. And oh, David, I can’t tell you how that necktie made me feel. That shabby bit of silk you will put round your neck! It proved to me that although you’ve lived twenty-six years without me, you need me, David; or at least let me think you do; for to watch over you is my necessity.

“At eight in the morning, at twelve, at five again, the mail comes in, but never the letter that I want most in the world—those hieroglyphics that I cannot read. I’m the saddest thing on earth I do believe, and I don’t think God can have meant us to live always away from the being we love.”

But when Tony re-read what she had written, she found that ink and the words a hand can trace, are of no use; and she tore the letter.

## CHAPTER XXXI

AT five of the afternoon the Holy Sacrament is celebrated close to the Grotto. The priest blesses the people and disease has been known to be cured on the victorious passing of the Host. The pilgrims come dragging rolling chairs and carts like ambulant coffins. They range their sick in two files, the pitiable army.

It was now the end of September, the last day of the month. Tony stood not far from the Grotto. She watched the priest advancing towards her, upholding the Host. All about was the opulent display of autumn, the fecundity of Ceres. The hills, in voluptuous curves, melted away in a haze. At intervals the wind, sudden as a sigh, breathed through the country, and the foliage stirred as under a caress. The priest turned to face the crowd. He intoned the *Laudate Sion Salvatorem*. He left the Grotto, and looking to the horizon as though he meant to reach as far, he paced slowly between the litters, the mattresses, holding high the Host, the health-giving emblem, radiant as a portable sun.

"Jesus, born of woman, have pity on us." The fresh wind of the mountains blew to a murmur the devout cry of the sick and their people.

"Mary, Thou Mother of God, have pity on us!" The monstenance passed on, terrible as the eye of God.

"He has made the blind to see, the deaf to hear," came the responses, like one voice. And the crowd bowed down before the oncoming glory. Only the trees fumed in the wind, tossing their branches irreverently.

"Mother of Jesus, say but one word and we shall be healed!" The invocation ceased. The priest stood strain-

ing for the miracle, while his surplice, glimmering coldly white, blew back helplessly in the rising gale.

Tony, kneeling on the ground, looked the sun in the eye. The wind had sent her the pinkest of cheeks and her hair tapped on her temples.

Slowly, like one who knows the worst, the priest retraced his steps. To left and right of him the sick lay patient, rigid, and Tony's gaze traveled with him back along this aisle of misery. At the far end stood a man, and he looked at Tony across the prostrate crowd stamped in the common mold of poverty, of disease. Of a sudden her eyes met his. All the blood in her body ebbed away from her heart. She suffocated in a chilly, delicious faintness.

The man was David Hearn and the sight of him seemed to draw her strength from her in a shuddering sigh. Her first thought was that since he and she were no longer together life had been as empty to him as it had to her. He had asked where she was and had come to Lourdes for her. Yet nothing in his gaze suggested the man driven by love to submission. His glance rested on her with an infinite sadness. If allowed to revisit those they have loved, so the dead must look, mute from the grave; and somehow she understood that he had not thought to see her here. Indeed, he turned, as though to escape from the sight of her. He would not approach her—she felt it. All her reserve, her pride, was swept away by a sense of aching regret. She must speak to him. At the barrier giving on the road, a sudden surge of the crowd brought them side to side. He drew off his hat. She saw his square forehead, white in the shadow of the brim, less tanned than his face. He was wearing a cloak such as artists affect. It entirely concealed his left side. Even at such a moment, she noticed his uncharacteristic dress, for David had always avoided the picturesque accouterments of the bohemian.

Had he meant to avoid her, he could not now. They

stood face to face. They were both as pale as those about them—as this crowd that had come to be cured; and involuntarily they broke into phrases of greeting, of surprise, into those conversational passwords that are the mantle of civilization in which humanity tries to hide its naked emotions. Neither looking at the other, they took the road, caught up with a litter, walked abreast of it, and passed it. The voice of the sufferer was blown to them, a faint human chord in the vast country.

Tony questioned David as to his health: he was well—quite, quite strong again—she did hope it.

“My head will have to be sawed off my body before I’m finished,” he had boasted, with the smile of his worst days.

Fearing a silence, they pressed forward, toward Lourdes. On either hand the aspiring poplars rose straight as exclamation points. David spoke of the exhilarating air. Tony praised the scenery. All about them was the blowing splendor of a vigorous autumn day. Once his cloak swept against her like a wing, and he, observing this, drew away from her. This instinctive movement gave Tony a feeling of desertion, of homesickness. She wanted to take him by the hand and ask, “Can’t you feel how much I love you? My life is here in my palm and passes from me to you.” Instead she went on talking of the scenery.

“Poor nature,” said David, “it has no peace now. You find railways through the Alps, at Lourdes disease.” And brusquely turning to her, “Did Felton know you were here?” he asked, with a rapid under-look, a darting of the eyes.

“Yes.”

“That makes everything clear.”

“What do you mean?”

“Felton advised me to go to La Rondel—it’s a village close to Lourdes—spoke of the scenery being in my line for landscape work.”

"Well?"

"Well, Felton is an elderly cupid. His mania is Hymen. He works for propinquity, willy-nilly."

"I see," said she; and they went on together, not knowing how to part. In imagination Tony had walked this road with David before. Now that they were side by side in reality, step to step, a sadness overcame her, too remote, too terrible, for tears.

"I go this way," she said rather plaintively, pointing to a swirl in the valley.

"And I this." And with a jerk of the head in the opposite direction, he indicated a stretch of field on the far side of which the edge of the sun seemed to rest.

"Well, it's good-by, then," she said. And he answered, "Good-by." She did not dare to give him her hand nor did he offer her his.

"If I'm something to him still," she thought, "he will look back just once before he gets to that clump of trees." But he moved dully away, without a backward glance. The billowy foliage engulfed him, and Tony was left face to face with the empty country.

The sun was setting, a giant symbol poised on the horizon. The rays of light had gone from the hills and shorn them bare. It was as though the flaming disc had drawn to itself all the splendor of the world—the sun was as a barbaric conqueror descending into the wastes of the night and holding in his arms the spoils of the whole earth.

"He doesn't love me any more," she thought, and never had she felt so sad. To drop out of some one's heart is a sort of death, the death of an idealized and dearer self that has gone about in another's breast.

That evening Tony stood at her window and watched the dusk settling. What homely peace four walls can hold! Was there ever a prettier sight than this paved court worn



by long autumn rains, by the come and go of sabots? The well stands in the center and the pulley croons. It is close on supper-time. Pails rattle, fagots are chopped, wooden shoes clack to and fro. For an hour the hospital opposite has become an inn, and the good coffee and the crackling charcoal have done away with the fetid odor of medicaments. On the doorstep, cleft like a valley by generations of foot-steps, sits the cat, washing her stomach ostentatiously. At intervals a swallow swoops down on tentative wings. All about blows a sort of rural sweetness. The wind brings the voice of every bell in the valley and shakes the late flowering vine that hangs like a curtain to the court's four walls, beating out its fragrance. Ambition, the travail of thought, the obsession of love—all these are out of place where peasants have gone to and fro bent on homely duties. Happiness is here, perhaps. And yet Tony is brooding at her window, thinking of David, who is near somewhere in the hills and lost to her; for nothing she can do—she knows it now—can touch him.

With the rattle of its wooden latch the door opposite Tony's window opened. She had a glimpse of the brick-paved hall, the quaint interior, and Sister Mary Magdalene came out, smiling between the starched wings of her head-dress.

"Good-evening, my Sister," called Tony, like a dryad through the vine.

The nun's smile spread from edge to edge of her head-dress and she crossed the court holding up her skirts, displaying her clumsy boots, those peasant boots that for all their hob-nails could move about her sick so silently.

"How are all those you take care of, my Sister?" asked Tony.

"Our Lady of Lourdes has strengthened them. They no longer complain. That is one miracle the Blessed Virgin has done already."

"To suffer so much and be brave is indeed a miracle, my Sister."

"I have something for you, 'Toinette. I stopped at the post-office and thought to ask for you." And the nun drew from the alpaca pocket that hung at her side, first her spectacles, then her breviary, and finally a letter.

"Thank you, my Sister."

"You are pale, 'Toinette. Yes, I've noticed it lately— heavy-eyed, as though you had slept badly. What is it, my child? I've read somewhere, 'There's only one sorrow when one is young,' " and the good Sister added simply, "Love was meant, I know. Is that it?"

"Gracious, when we're young we have lots more sorrows than one; and thank goodness for it. One sorrow means only one joy, doesn't it, my Sister?"

The old woman nodded, looking out shrewdly between the wings of her head-dress that crackled in the breeze. She stood in the attitude peculiar to the nun. Her hands, kept with a scrupulous cleanliness but gray through wear, were clasped high near the gold cross under the chin. Mere instruments of charity were these hands. The fingers gaped apart used by the eternal fetch and carry of a life of service, gnarled by some forty years of waiting on the poor and the distressed.

"My Sister, my Sister," called a voice from an upper window. "You are wanted."

"Good, good; I come," grunted the old nun, at once huffy and affectionate. "I expected no less," she growled to Tony. "My children become impossible. It is 'my potion,' 'my salve,' 'my crutch,'—what would you? Thirteen are in the left ward, and only one old woman to be mother to them all." And this humble saint went off to her cares of love with the scuttle of a diligent mouse.

"My dear Jeunesse," wrote Felton; and for a moment his letter lay in Tony's palm like the grasp of a hand alive with

the genius of friendship. "My dear Jeunesse—There is a certain old scribe in London who, when he pads out for his constitutional, never passes through St. James's Park or the Row, for if he did he might be reminded that a little friend of his isn't keeping step with him this autumn. This is a frigid, cheerless autumn. As I grow older the seasons deteriorate—in fact, nothing is quite so nice as it was when I was young. For example, my staircase. It has grown so steep as to drain me of breath, yet I can remember when those very same steps were particularly easy.

"No, Jeunesse, it is I, not the world, that has altered. I'm not half so well up in my profession as I used to be. Upon my soul, the longer I live the less I seem to know about it. As a young man I had a fine surety of style. I said: 'This is good' and 'That is bad.' I said it with conviction and I was believed. Now I weaken my phrases. I'm diffident, I'm appealing. I paraphrase with 'Or at least so it seems to me.' It's a mistake—my word is losing weight. 'Why, you old dodderer,' I say to myself, trying to work up some spirit, 'of course you know more than every one else—you're a critic.' And so I have argued myself into believing that I am wise and that I ought to write to you, Tony. I have something difficult—terrible, even—to tell you;—and yet news that enables one to read oneself better—to see more clearly what is right to do—isn't all bad news, is it, my sturdy, brave Tony?

"A friend of yours and mine, David Hearn, is one of the unhappiest men on earth to-day and has been since August the 29th. After you left a fever of work took hold of him. His room at the hospital was crammed with artists, with bohemians, and he orating in their midst. He had imagined a composition of peculiar beauty, he told me, and was in a frenzy to finish his memorial statue. On August the 11th he declared himself cured, and for all the nurse could say or do, he left the hospital, mortally offending the surgeon

who had charge of him and who refused to undertake the care of him any longer. He went back to his work as a man might to drink. He shut his doors against me and against all his friends. I was told afterwards that he slept and ate scarcely enough to keep body and soul together. This memorial statue will have cost him dear and will never be finished, for his left arm, which, as you will remember, was fractured by his fall and far from healed when he quarreled with his surgeon and left his care, grew inflamed. Blood poisoning set in, followed by gangrene.

"On August 22nd Drs. Martin, Calthorp, and Ryan had a consultation. They deplored David's obstinacy in leaving the hospital. He was removed under their care to the Midland Infirmary. Four days after the same surgeons, plus Dr. McKinnel, held another consultation, and on August the 29th at three o'clock in the afternoon David's left arm was amputated from the shoulder."

The letter in Tony's hand trembled as though her heart were beating in this sheet of paper.

"Yes," wrote Felton, "to me, too, it is a fearful thought that those deft, ambitious fingers can never again mold the clay to the image of the brain. Nature is astutely cruel. She destroys men often through their gifts. She robs a Beethoven of his hearing, a Turner of his eyes.

"When I obtained permission to see David, I found him bolstered up in bed, smiling. 'I am like St. George,' he told me. 'I have set my heel on the dragon—a dragon all made up of ambition and professional jealousy—always howling to be great. And plenty of worry he's given me, the old brute!' For some minutes he moved his right hand on the counterpane. 'I shall learn,' he said, 'to paint with one hand. It will help pass the time.' I don't remember his saying much more, except that he kept asking me, 'Why don't you look at me, Felton?' And indeed I avoided meeting his eyes, for fear he should read mine and think I

was sorry for him, though it was really his courage, his fine, helpless pluck, that kept me blowing my nose.

"Then it was I did something that perhaps I had no business to do. I told David of a certain village where I had once passed my holidays, La Rondel in the Pyrenees. The scenery, I said, was of just the right character for landscape painting. I advised David, when he was strong enough, to travel to La Rondel. He set out for France last Friday. I had a post-card from him. He is staying in a peasant's house at the far end of the village.

"Now, from La Rondel, Tony, you can see the spire of Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes. Why, a certain sturdy pedestrian I know could walk from Lourdes to La Rondel in forty minutes. Since you left, David Hearn has never spoken of you to me Tony. He has never asked me where you are. So far as I know, he has put you out of his life. The dead, go, go out of our lives; but they are not forgotten always. Sometimes those we have loved grow dearer when we have lost them. . . ."

## CHAPTER XXXII

WHAT a poignant, what an almost agonizing, joy it is, to hurry through the evening along a country road towards the being you love! On either side up-soar the trees, attentive, expectant, straining skyward, as though predicting the rise of the moon. A mysterious breath shakes the foliage; across the surface of the river passes a delicious shiver; fragrant, enveloping, the dusk sinks like a veil, and the earth relaxes, stirred by the approach of the night's deep hours.

That woman who through the dark hurries towards the man she loves when he is suffering, when he is in trouble—she is twice happy, for then she comes, not only as his accomplice of joy, but as the mother, the protector.

Some three miles from Lourdes, in the folds of the hills, in a green crevice, the village of La Rondel hides by itself. When Tony came to the mud-paved road between the gabled, overlapping houses, the moon was risen. Oppressed with the languor of the night it hung midways in the void, uncertain which way to travel through the deep blue ether.

Discreetly shuttered, the village drowsed. Only one light burned at the far end of the street. Tony made towards it. Something told her that the haggard spirit she had come to comfort must be sleepless among the simple laborers of the earth.

The odor of damp straw and overripe vegetables gave to the air a sweet corruption. She heard the sleepy beasts, horse or ox, stamp in the stalls, while on the belfry the weather-cock swung, droning to itself some humble legend.

The feverish light—she had divined it—was his. He was close to the open window, his face averted, and a strange



ecstasy came over her. She felt aglow with the power to heal. As she stood there in the dark she marveled that the pity, the love, surging from her could not call him to look out into the night.

"David!" Her voice, oppressed with tenderness, did not reach him. The stillness was so intense that it weighted the air like a drug, soporific, stupefying.

"David!" He did not hear her. Away off among the hills a vulture reiterated its sad, uncanny cry. She took a pebble and threw it at his window. The pebble bounded into his room, and all at once his shoulders blotted out the light.

"Qui est là?"

"Ton amie."

"Tony?"

"Yes, David."

He flinched and drew away from sight. But not before she had seen his coat-sleeve hanging slack at his side.

And now for the first time she noticed that the door of the cottage was open a crack. It held from the outside by a wooden latch only. She pushed against it and it gave way. So black was the interior, so pungent with the odor of pine, that she felt herself in a box, shut in, with the lid down; and of a sudden her groping hands stroked the smooth, worn rail of a banister. Under her feet the steps creaked ever so discreetly, assuring the whole house this was no stranger's tread coming up through the darkness, for youth, for love had mounted before and would mount again while the old boards held together.

As she came higher, an oblong of light faced her. With each step she saw more: a table littered with papers, a discouraged looking easel skulking in a corner—and some one moving about? No, the room was empty. Only the cotton curtains that drooped on either side of the window, long, limp ghosts, quivered in the rising breath of night.

of your work—you have a big future. All your life's before you. You will love some one else later and be happy, and I pray God you may."

Her answer was to look up at him with a smile almost divine, the smile that in a lifetime comes to a woman's lips but once or twice. "Will you marry me, David? Tell me, dearest, shall I go down on my knees? Is that a better way to propose?"

"My little Tony, my dear Tony, we must say good-by. I'll go back with you to Lourdes. I'm afraid for you in the country at night alone. It'll be good-by then, Tony; it must be good-by."

"Tell me you don't love me, David, and I'll never ask you to marry me again. I'll go home as quiet as a mouse. Only tell me you don't love me any more."

A mysterious and terrible beauty is that of a woman fighting for her happiness, for her love. A deadly pallor devastates her face. All the life, the magnetism of her body burns in her eyes and emanates from her like heat from a flame. She radiates power, passion, despair, and a dangerous, yet childish, tenderness.

"Tell me you don't love me any more."

"No, no, I don't love you," cried David. "Why should I? I have no reason to. No, no, I don't love you. Only don't look at me like that, my dear love."

"You've said it." And with a sharp, queer sob, she clung to him, while all her body trembled.

"Don't cry, Tony. Don't cry, darling. I've never seen you cry before—I can't bear it."

"Lend me your handkerchief, David," and Tony mopped her own eyes, and then she mopped his. "And now," said she in the most business-like manner, "I consider you to be engaged to be married to me." And she sat herself down in his chair and pulled on her hat, while her round cheeks went as pink as the pinkest of pink carnations, and her big,

starry eyes seemed to give out light. He knelt close to her, so close that the lamp between them made but one shadow of them both.

"To-night was a great procession of pilgrims, David, each asking the Virgin Mary for what he wanted most. As we go back to Lourdes, we will pass the way they went."

"I saw the lights from my window, way off in the crook of the hills. But I couldn't look at them long. All beautiful things made me sad before you came. I was afraid of nature. She's so complete—so terrible. Anything imperfect offends her. She never forgives infirmity. I have suffered a great deal, Tony, but I shall be cured—I feel it. Yes, I can get well now."

"I wish all people who love each other and have quarreled could come together as you and I have, David."

He took one of her hands, but from a feeling of delicacy, because she had come to him in the night alone from so far, he did not like to kiss it. He turned it palm upward, palm downward, and studied it as though its flexibility were a surprising, an engaging discovery. Just then, smothered by distance, muffled by the foliage of the hills, came the vulture's regretful cry.

"How miserable I was last time I heard that bird croak," said David. "Soon we'll be together always—you and I. Tell me," he asked—and his lips trembled in a whimsical, tender smile—"we'll be together while we live, my Tony."

"While we live, my dearest." And with a gesture inexplicably touching, the gesture of a mother who clasps her arms about the being she loves, and strong through devotion, through self-sacrifice, keeps evil afar off—with just such tenderness Tony drew David's head down on her breast and through her shabby blouse he could feel her heart, her dear heart, beating.

of your work—you have a big future. All your life's before you. You will love some one else later and be happy, and I pray God you may."

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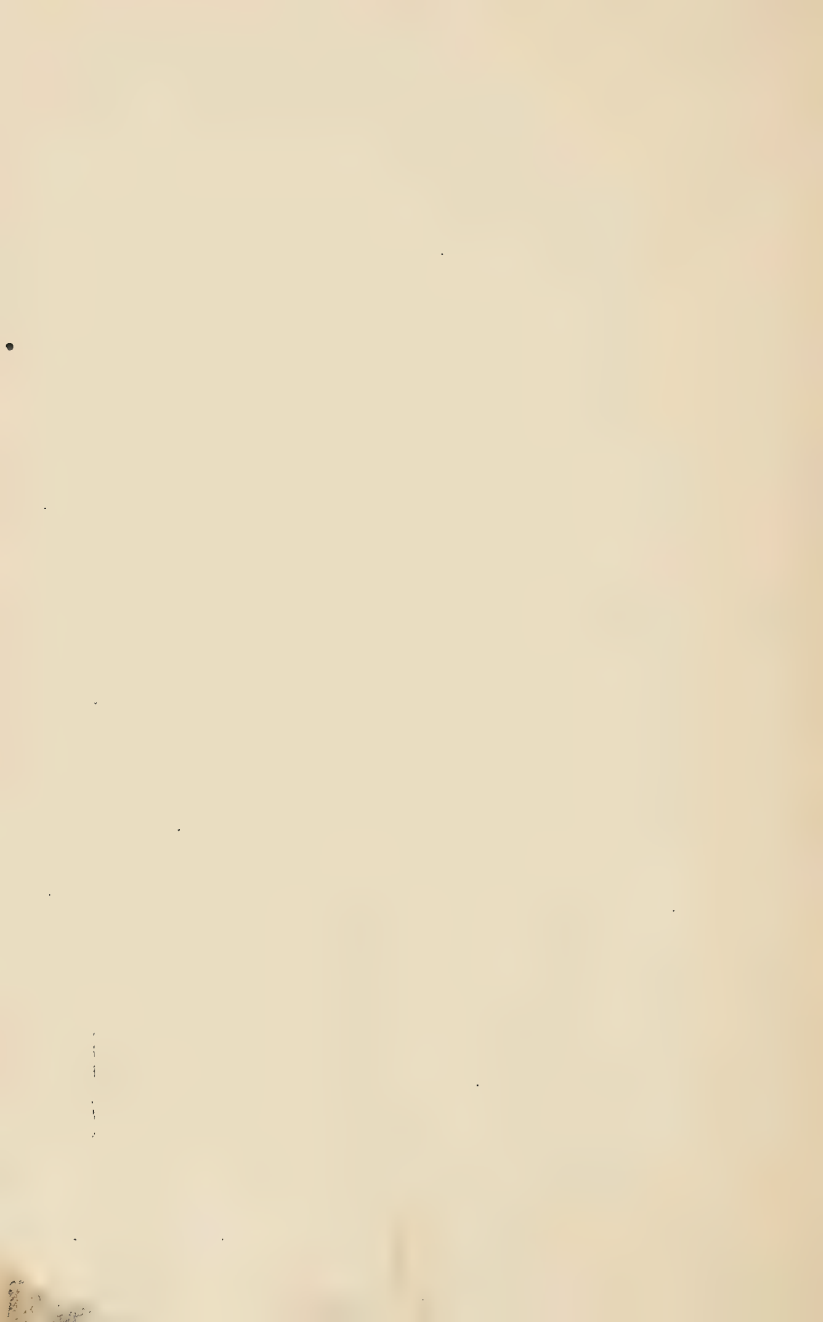
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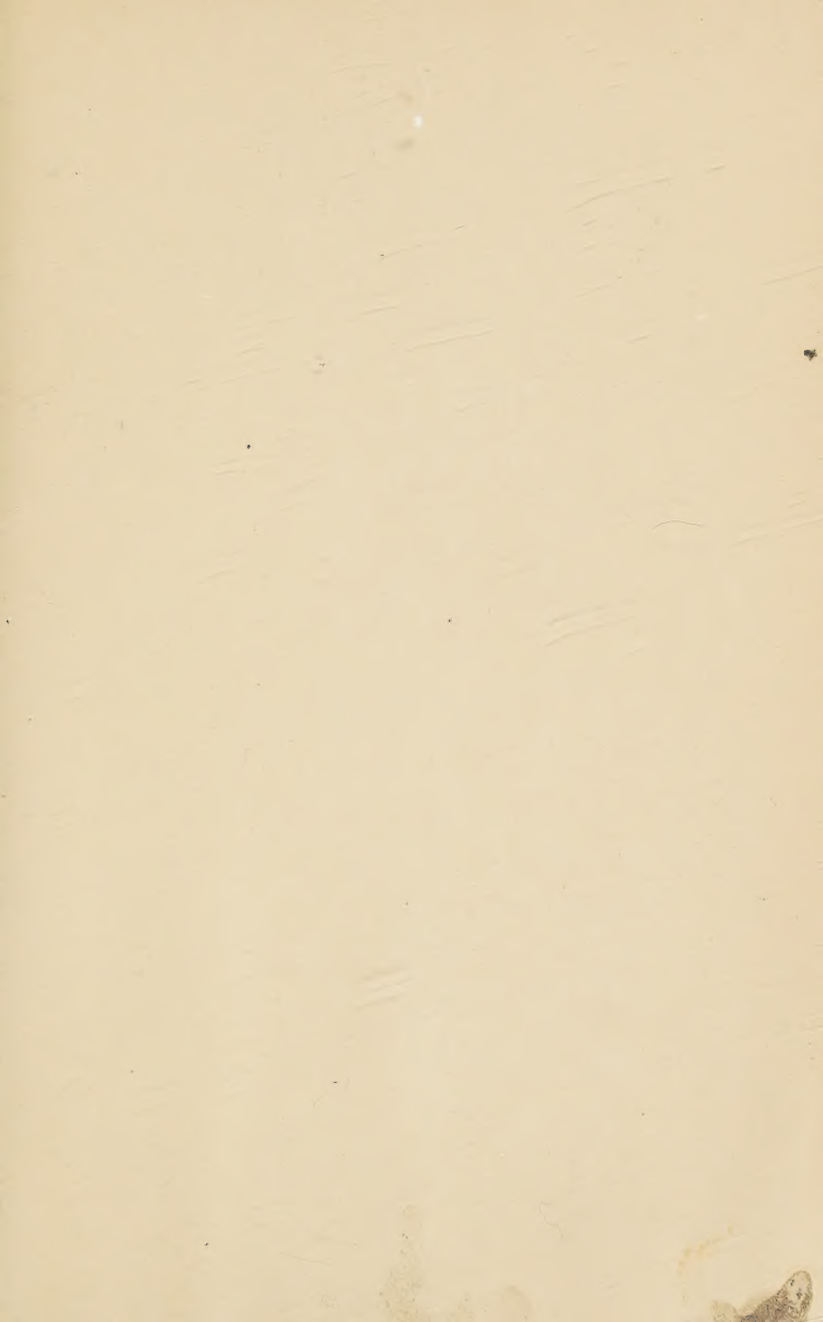
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1-3	2-3	3-3	4-3
2-4	1-1	1-1	6
3-6	3		9
4-8	4		13
5-10	5		15
6-12	6		18
7-14	7		21
8-16	8		24
9-18	9		27
10-20	0		30
22	1		33
23	2		36
24	3		39
26	4		42
28	5		45
30	6		6
32	7		12
34	8		18
36	0		24
38	1		20
40	2		26
42	3		48
	4		
	5		
	6		
	7		
	8		
	9		

222  
24

6

22

2

20

25



